

News

Children, Greatest Treasure Of Parenthood - Mrs. Priscilla Otti

By Chibunna Ikeokwu.

The wife of Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti has said that children are the greatest treasure of parenthood hence; their safety and well-being are non-negotiable.

The governor's wife stated this at her Government House office recently in Umuahia, during a Christmas Party she organised to celebrate Abia children.

Mrs. Otti explained that Christmas is a season of joy, love, sharing, and extending hands of compassion to people around us.

She reaffirmed her commitment to championing strategic initiatives that will enhance the growth, development, and well-being of Abia children.

According to her, "during the just-concluded 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, I reaffirmed my commitment to building an Abia where the rights, dignity, and safety of every individual, including our children, are upheld".

"We will not tolerate acts of violence and abuse against our children in Abia State.

Child trafficking is a terrible crime that affects many children around the world.

This is unacceptable, and we must work together to prevent it, ensuring our children are safe and protected. We must create awareness about the dangers of child trafficking, abuse, and molestation even as we strive to rid out traffickers out of Abia State," Mrs. Otti further stated.

However, she emphasized quality education as a necessity for every child in

Abia Honours Students Over Jets Competition

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enhances academic excellence and harness the potentials of the boundless young minds.

In their remarks respectively the Special Adviser to the Governor on Education, Mr. Kenechukwu Nwosu, Executive Board Chairman ASUBEB, Mrs. Lydia Onuoha and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Sir Ikechukwu Oriewa attributed the remarkable achievements of the students to the unwavering commitment and support of Governor Otti, to the education sector in the State and appreciated them for bringing Laurels to the State.

Also speaking, the state NUT Chairman, Comrade

Abia State, regardless of their background or circumstances and appealed to parents to take time to engage in meaningful conversations, lead by example, and create an environment that fosters kindness, empathy, and respect for the children.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Dr Maureen Agukwa represented by the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Ogechi Oguama had expressed happiness that the efforts put together by the Office of the Wife of the Governor to celebrate the children means that they are precious.

Abians Celebrates Christmas With Renewed Joy And Hope

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as a result of the non-payment of their wages, this year's wages were paid before the 20th of December. The same way that traditional rulers went home with 250,000.00 each.

Apart from an abiding fidelity to prompt payment of salaries and allowances, Abians both at home and in the diaspora will be driving on much improved road infrastructure to their various localities. The same way that improved security infrastructure put in place by the Governor Otti Administration has ensured that the State remains one of the safest in the country.

The sense of safety which Abians are enjoying and the fast disappearance of dilapidated road infrastructure which were

hitherto common sites has given added impetus to the joy of Abians as they celebrate this year's festivities. In all the nooks and crannies of Abia State from Ukwa East and West to Aba metropolis, from the large Ngwa region to Umuahia and Ikwuano, from the far flung Umunochi and Isukwuato areas to Bende, Ohafia and Arochuku areas the positive impact of the Governor Otti Administration which cut across sectors like health care delivery, education, electricity supply, roads, security etc are being felt by all. Indeed, Governor Otti has restored the hope of a once beleaguered people in government and Abia citizens are once more quiet upbeat about a joyous Christmas celebration.

Friday Madu, the state President, ANCOSS Sir Mathew Uzuegbu represented by the Association's PRO Elder Ekele Obioma and State NAPPS Chairman Pastor Joseph Okowu commended the students for their excellent performance at the National JETS Competition and described the gesture as a reflection of hard work, dedication and commitment to excel in life and academic pursuit.

In her address the State Co-ordinator of JETS Competition who is also the Director of Science, Technical and Higher Education, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Mrs. Hope Nwosu highlighted

Mrs. Oguama reiterated that her Ministry is continuing the advocacy for the Child Right Act to be reviewed and domesticated, to protect the right of the children.

In their separate remarks, the Commissioner for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Mrs. Ngozi Felix advised parents to nurture and uphold the moral compass of the society for their children to emulate while, the Commissioner for Basic Education, Elder Goodluck Ubochi emphasised that the Office of the Wife of the Governor prioritizes the development of our children, through quality education.

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Responding on behalf of other Schools that participated at the National, Competition the Coordinator Dority International Early Learning School, Aba Mr. Bright Adawisi commended the State Government for promoting academic excellence and wished all the participants success.

The event featured presentations of awards, medals and certificates to the best students and teachers.

Reactions Trail Flag Off Of New Abia Airport Project

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an integral part of his administrations urbanization agenda and a catalyst for economic transformation.

"In the new Abia, an airport is not just an important project for the long term prosperity of the state, it is an integral component of our vision to open the State to the world.

"We are poised to turn Abia into a major destination hub. An airport in Abia particularly at this location will not only accelerate our urbanization agenda beyond Aba and Umuahia, it will also send a clear signal to the world that we are open and prepared to rise to a higher plane in the race for social and economic transformation of our homeland.

"This airport will therefore serve a new advantage to the appeal of Aba as an important destination in the West African subregion.

"The volume of investments we anticipate and the projected influx of high network individuals for businesses, conferences and events even for holidays, investing in an airport is certainly a right decision.

Governor Otti thanked the land donor communities of Ubaha, Umuahia, Ikputu, Umuosua, Umuezeukwu, Umuode and Umuomainta Nvosi, for their generosity and support for the project and disclosed that the State has started preparation for payment of compensation to genuine land owners.

He announced that the project would be completed in 36 months and thanked all stakeholders who contributed toward making the project a reality.

Performing the ground-breaking ceremony, the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace, Barr. Festus Keyamo, SAN, thanked Governor Otti for partnering the Federal Government in converting the project initially conceptualized as an Airstrip to a full-fledged airport in

addition to his commitment to provide all that is required including counterpart funding for the project.

Keyamo, while noting that Abia is the heartbeat of industrialization of the South-East region, described the Airport as a veritable enabler for economic and social development.

He said that it is the vision of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu that Abia be connected to the rest of the world through the project and assured that the people of Nsulu Community would be given first considerations in appointment and employment in the further airport project.

Also speaking, the Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu, said that President Tinubu is deliberate about the development of the South-East and Abia in particular, and pointed out that the President is the only President that assented to the South East Development Commission.

While describing Governor Otti as a Governor that understands synergy, Rt. Hon. Kalu assured that the National Assembly would ensure enough funds are appropriated to support the airport project, which he said is of economic importance.

In her speech, the Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Dr. Mrs. Nkeiruka Onyejiocha, thanked Mr. President for considering Abia for an international airport and maintained that Abia will benefit a lot from the project.

In their speeches, the member representing Isiala-Ngwa North and South Federal Constituency, Chief Ginger Onwusibe and a stakeholder in the area Chief Ncheta Omereke while calling on the host community, the Nsulu people to cooperate with the state government for the smooth take off and completion of the project in record time, pointed out that the administration of Governor Alex Otti meant well for the people of Isialangwa North LGA.

Earlier in their remarks, the Commissioner for Transport, Dr Chimezie Ukaegbu, and his Lands and Housing counterpart, Mr Chaka Chukwumereije while describing the airport project as a gateway to the world and a catalyst for economic and sustainable growth, revealed that the airport project would be situated on 1,325 hectares of land assured that due compensation will be duly paid to the land donors.

Change of Name

I, formerly known and addressed as Miss Chikezie Amarachi, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. MARAIZU AMARACHI CHIKEZIE. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note.

MRS. MARAIZU AMARACHI CHIKEZIE.

I, formerly known and addressed as Chima Amarachi Favour, now wish to be known and addressed as ALPHAEUS AMARACHI FAVOUR. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note.

ALPHAEUS AMARACHI FAVOUR.

Change of Name / Correction of Date of Birth

I, formerly known, called and addressed as Miss Ifeanyi Adaku, now wish to be known, called and addressed as MRS. RICHARD ADAKU FAVOUR. My date of birth was wrongly captured during my Personal Voters Card (PVC) as 11th April 1992 instead of 5th December, 1994. And my correct date of birth is 5th December 1994. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. First Bank and the general public please take note.

MRS. RICHARD ADAKU FAVOUR.

Correction of Name / Date of Birth

This is to affirm that Ibedu Chiamaka which was wrongly written on my Bank Account with FCMB and Ibedu Chiamaka Kate are said to be same person. I now wish to be known and addressed as IBEDU CHIAMA KATE and my correct date of Birth is 6TH NOVEMBER 2006, not 11th June 2006. All documents bearing my former names, remain valid. The general public should please take note.

IBEDU CHIAMA KATE.

Sporting Ambassador

AMBASSADOR
With Jacob Joseph

CAF Best Player Award: All Nigerian Awardees

By Joseph Jacob

Super Eagles of Nigeria and Atalanta Italy forward, Ademola Lookman recently emerged the 2024 African Footballer of the Year. In this report, Sporting Ambassador brings you all the Nigerians who have won the award.

1993: Rashidi Yekini Rule Africa

Rashidi Yekini moved from Ivorian side Africa Sports National to Portuguese side Vitoria de Setubal, where he became an instant hot cake banging in goals with aplomb. He scored 34 goals in 32 matches to help his club get promoted to the top division.

He was also prolific for the Super Eagles of Nigeria as they qualified for their first World Cup and booked their place for the 1994 Africa Cup of Nations, which they eventually won.

No wonder he became the first Nigerian to win the African Player of the Year Award.

1994: Emmanuel Amunike

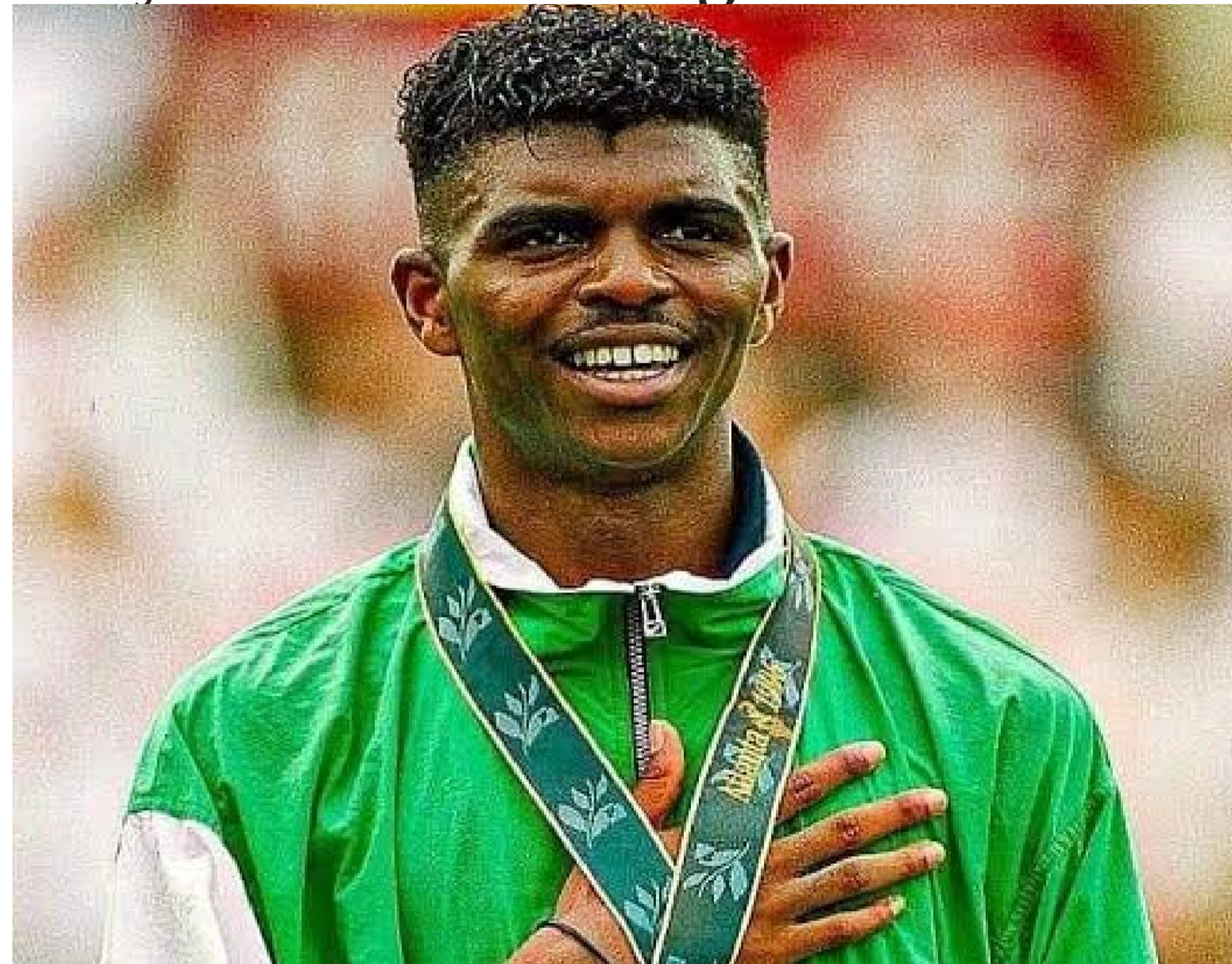
Emmanuel Amunike was the hero when Nigeria came from behind to defeat the Copper Bullets of Zambia in the final of the 1994 Africa Cup of Nations. Amunike's brace was all Nigeria needed to win her second AFCON title.

The Barcelona player also dazzled at the World Cup scoring against Bulgaria in the opening match and the only goal against Italy as the Europeans eliminated Nigeria 2-1 in the round of 16.

CAF rewarded Amunike for his outstanding performance with the African Player of the Year.

1996: King Kanu Nwankwo Reigns Supreme

Kanu Nwankwo was the skipper of the Dream Team I that



Kanu Nwankwo

won Africa's first Olympic gold medal in football at the Atlanta Olympics. He led by example scoring Nigeria's only goal in the victory against Hungary. His two late goals, including a golden goal gave Nigeria a memorable 4-3 semi-final victory over Brazil.

Nigeria went ahead to defeat Argentina 3-2 in the final.

After the Olympics, Kanu returned to Inter Milan, a club he

joined from Ajax for a fee of \$4.7 million. A medical examination revealed that he had a serious heart defect, which doctors then believed would put an end to his career.

However, he underwent a successful surgery in November same year to replace an aortic valve.

Despite his health challenges, Kanu won the African Footballer of the Year because of his outstanding performance that dwarfed the performance of other African players.

1997: Prince of Monaco, Victor Ikpeba Reigns

Victor Ikpeba overcame a tough start to life in Monaco to later win the hearts of fans of Monaco, who dubbed him the Prince of Monaco.

Ikpeba scored 13 league goals to help Monaco win the league title and finished second-top goal scorer in the 1996/1997 UEFA Cup. His performance placed him head and shoulders above other African players that he won the African player of the Year.

1999: Kanu Nwankwo Reigns Again

"Form" they say "is temporary, but class is permanent." No wonder Papilo as Kanu Nwankwo is fondly called overcame his health challenges to bounce back to the summit of African Football.

After playing just 12 times

and scoring only a single goal for Inter Milan, Kanu Nwankwo moved to Arsenal in February of 1999 for a fee of £4.15 million.

Kanu scored his first goal for Arsenal in the FA Cup against Derby County, when he came from the bench to score the only goal of the match. He gradually emerged as a super sub as he scored crucial goals from the bench against Sheffield Wednesday, Tottenham Hotspur and Aston Villa.

In the 1999/2000 season, Kanu scored 17 goals in 50 matches including a famous hat-trick in fifteen minutes against Chelsea in October of 1999, which helped the Gunners snatched victory from the jaws of defeat, turning a 2-0 deficit to a 3-2 victory.

No wonder he won the CAF Player of the Year for the second time.

2023 Victorious Victor Osimhen Emerge

Victor Osimhen hit the ground running as soon as he arrived the city of Naples to lace his boots for Napoli, smashing club and individual records.

He took Napoli to their first UEFA Champions League quarter-final after scoring three goals over two legs against Eintracht Frankfurt for the Italians to win 5-0 on aggregate.

Osimhen's equalizer against

Udinese confirmed Napoli as Serie A champions for the first time in 33 years, equaled George Weah's record of African top scorer in the Serie A and broke Samuel Eto'O's record as the African with the highest number of goals in a single Italian championship season.

Osimhen later broke Weah's record and ended the season as the top scorer with 26 goals, the first African to achieve this feat.

Osimhen's performance in Napoli was so overwhelming that many fans believed he had taken the crown of Naples from Diego Maradona, who was wonderful in his playing days for the club.

2024: Ademola Lookman's Glorious Year

Lookman chose to score his first career hat-trick the biggest stage when he scored three goals in the Europa League final against Bayer Leverkusen at the Dublin Arena on May 22, to give Napoli their first Europa League trophy. He thus became the first player to score hat-trick in a one-legged Men's European final since Pierino Prati in 1969.

On September 4, Lookman became the first current Atalanta player to be nominated for Ballon d'Or due to his performances in Nigeria's build up to the AFCON final as well as Atalanta's triumph in the Europa League.

Creative Writers Hangout

The Hot Snow (12)

By Joseph Jacob

Eze had just finished trimming the flowers and was mowing the lawn when he heard the horn of a car blaring at the gate. He knew it was no one but, Hedda.

He ran to the gate and opened it. Hedda zoomed in with her black BMW jeep and parked at the car park.

Eze locked the gate and went back to his work.

"How is it going?" Hedda asked, waving at him.

"Fine" he replied as he waved back.

It took him thirty minutes to be through with the lawn. He sat down, drank from his bottled water and remembered home. He had not yet gotten the two million naira he needed to offset his debt and time was fast running out.

He had not sent a single kobo to his family. A tap on his back dragged him out of his day dream. Hedda was standing akimbo over him. Eze sighed and stood up.

"You've done a great job today", Hedda said. "I'm happy to have you. I wouldn't have done one tenth of this."

Eze said nothing. As she was returning to the house she said over her shoulder, "Go and shower, I'm waiting in the bedroom. Don't keep me waiting beyond ten minutes."

"You've seen the amount of work I've done today", Eze protested.

"What is that supposed to mean?" Hedda asked as she stopped and turned facing Eze.

"I am tired."

"So am I. but I need you now and I don't want to wait beyond ten minutes. You get that?" she turned and returned to the house. Unknown to Eze, Hedda was a nymphomaniac. Eze sighed and picked his water bottle as he headed for the house.

It was three hours later that Hedda rolled her flabby body out of bed smiling jauntily like a sow surrounded by boars. As usual Eze was left on the bed completely exhausted and asking, "What have I gotten into?"

An hour later, they were on the dining table having their dinner. "I'm thinking of asking you for a favor", Eze said hesitantly.

"Go ahead." Hedda replied smilingly.

"I need some money to settle some personal problems", Eze said looking at the flower on the table.

Hedda stiffened. She had been worried that Eze would leave her one day. She had reasoned and decided that the best way to keep Eze is to starve him of money.

"What problem is that?" "It is personal."

"If you're here with me, nothing is personal."

"This is personal", Eze said as he mustered the courage to look into her eyes for a split second.

"How much do you want?" she asked with a frown.

Eze quickly made a mental conversion from Euros to naira, "One thousand five hundred euros."

"What! I am not giving you such an amount of money."

help me." Eze shouted back at her.

"Don't talk to me like that in my house."

"I have been doing whatever you want from me. I want you to help me." Eze shouted and banged his fist on the dining table. A tumbler rolled down and smashed on the floor.

Hedda's face reddened as she stared at the pieces of glass on the tiled floor. "Get out of my house."

Goose pimples spread all over Eze.

"Leave now or I'll call the police." She pushed her chair back, stood up and started going towards her cell phone on the centre table.

Eze ran after her and held her fat hand from picking the cell phone, "It's ok Honey, I love you, please, don't throw me out of your house."

Their eyes met and Eze saw that burning desire in her eyes. She started unbuttoning Eze's shirt as she pushed him towards the bedroom.

The following day, Hedda took Eze to the most expensive boutique in Frankfurt and bought everything that Eze laid his hands on.

When they got into

her car she looked at Eze and smiled, "I'm sorry for last night. Tell me whatever you want, I'll get it. But, I'm not giving you my money." She did not wait for Eze's response as she set the car in motion.

She dropped Eze off and left for work. Eze took his time and searched the whole house in the guise of cleaning up. He laughed when one of the keys he found at Hedda's dressing table opened her wardrobe.

There was a briefcase inside the wardrobe. When Eze opened it he found important documents in it. He took his time and went through all the documents. One of the documents was Hedda's bank statement showing a balance of 4.9 million Euros.

From that day, Eze started scheming how to dupe Hedda.

From a decent man struggling to make a living, Eze has transformed into a potential criminal. Will he succeed or will he spend the rest of his life in German prison? Don't miss our next publication.

CITATIONS INSPIRANTES We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospect. -Anais Nin



Flora Nwapa

Florence Nwanzuruahu Nkiru Nwapa was born on January 13, 1931 in Oguta, Imo State. She was the eldest of the six children of Christopher Ijioma an agent with the United African Company and Martha Nwapa, a teacher. Flora attended her Primary School education in Oguta before proceeding to Elelenwo in Obio Akpor LGA of Rivers State for her secondary education. She later completed her secondary education at CMS Girls School in Lagos State.

In 1957, when she was 26, she bagged a B. A. degree from University College, Ibadan, Oyo State. The following year, she earned a Diploma in Education from Edinburgh University in Scotland. Flora Nwapa got married to Chief Gogo Nwakuche. She had three children: Ejine Nzeribe, Uzoma Gogo Nwakuche and Amede Nzeribe. When she returned to Nigeria, Nwapa joined the civil service, which saw her serve in different capacities, starting from a class teacher, who taught English and Geography. She served as Assistant Registrar, University of Lagos between 1962-1967.

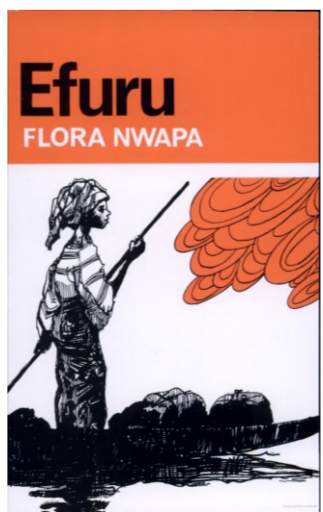
After the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War, she served as Commissioner of Health and Social Welfare in East Central State between 1970 and 1971. She was later redeployed to the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Development.. a position she held till 1974. She was a visiting lecturer at Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State. She was appointed a visiting professor of creative writing at University of Maiduguri in 1989.

Flora's first book was Efuru, it was published in 1966 when she was only 30. The novel placed her among the pioneers of African women creative writers.

In 1970 she published her second novel, Idu and followed by Never Again in 1975. Six years later, she published One is Enough, which was followed by Women are Different, published in 1986. In 1971 she published This is Lagos and Wives at War nine years later. Her collection of poems, Cassava Song and Rice Song was published in 1986.

Flora Nwapa died of Pneumonia on October 16, 1993 at a hospital in Enugu at the age of 62. Her final novel, The Lake Goddess, was posthumously published. Nwapa's son, Uzoma Gogo Nwakuche, founded the Flora Nwapa Foundation, a California non-profit organization in 1994.

Mercy Emeh



News

Why Peculiar Diamond Montessori Academy Is Established - Rev. Ogala

By Harbour Ugochinyere

The Proprietress of Peculiar Diamond Montessori Academy, Umuagu Ibeku, Umuahia, Rev. (Mrs.) Lizzy Ogala, has said that the school is a divine inspiration, borne out to give every child the opportunity to acquire quality education, without financial constraints.

She stated this recently, during the school's 2024 Christmas party, held on the academy's premises.

The event, which was the school's first outdoor activity, since it came into academic existence, about three months ago was part of activities to mark the end of the 2024/2025 first term academic session.

Rev Ogala said that this accounted for the conducive learning environment, the calibre of teachers recruited, and the friendly tuition fees system, which has seen no child denied of opportunity to access quality education because of financial hindrance.

According to her, the motive for setting up the school was not for profit-making, rather it is to assist children to acquire quality education at minimal cost.

She restated the quest of the school to attain high academic excellence with the employment of committed, experienced, qualified, and trained teachers. She commended the high level of performances exhibited by the pupils as an indication of high educational knowledge being impacted on the pupils, in line with the vision of developing great minds that would make global impact.

The proprietress assured that, with the result seen, the school would become one of the best in the state within the next one or two years of its existence.

Rev Ogala said that Peculiar Diamond Academy places a high premium on the spiritual life of the pupils, stressing that they are being equipped with the Biblical knowledge that would help their spiritual growth. She disclosed that from the next academic term, the school would be holding monthly praying and fasting programmes, for the pupils, to help them develop strong spiritual potentials that would help them overcome life challenges.

Earlier, the Head Teacher, Rev Sopuruchi Diokpa, said that the pupils had been impacted with sound educational knowledge that would make them compete favourably with their contemporaries from other schools.

Rev Diokpa reassured parents that they would not regret trusting the educational future/needs of their children in the school, as they have capable teachers that would impact the requisite knowledge on the pupils.

He said that what the pupils had demonstrated was just a little of what they had acquired in the last three months and promised that they have the capacity to transform any child no matter how dull to a bright pupil.

Rev. Diokpa commended the friendly disposition of the proprietress, who goes out of the way to meet even the personal needs of the pupils. He appealed to parents to compliment this gesture by providing their children with the required educational materials, that would help them meet up in their studies.

The event featured recitations, dancing and presentation of prizes to good performing pupils.



Gov. Alex Otti

Gov Otti Assures Abians Of Comprehensive Restructuring

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State has announced a comprehensive restructuring of the state's security architecture to address emerging criminal activities, assuring Abians of adequate security, especially during the yuletide season.

Speaking during the monthly Media Parley tagged; "Governor Otti Speaks to Abians," held at the Government House, Umuahia, the Governor disclosed that South East Governors are also collaborating to find lasting solutions to insecurity in the region.

He assured Abians in the diaspora planning to return home for the festive season of adequate security measures.

"In the area of Security, we have decided to rejig the security architecture. We are doing everything possible to ensure that our state is safe and particularly at this time".

"We have made quite some investments in security and the issue about security is not something you should discuss in details.

"I would like people to know that the government is not going to rest on its oars until we rid this place of criminal activities, both in the rural or urban areas.

"I would also encourage our brothers and sisters in diaspora who have given indication that they were going to come to continue because we have made adequate arrangements to protect everyone in the state particularly in this time", the Governor further assured.

Responding to reports of alleged extortion of commuters around the Nunya-Isoikwato junction on the Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway, the Governor directed his Chief Security Officer to immediately

investigate the matter and report back promptly.

He explained that the Abia Airport Project is largely a Federal Government project, while Abia State only keyed in, in terms of the runway upgrade.

"The first time I spoke about Abia Airport I made it clear that it is a Federal Government project, what we have come to do is to provide land and also provide logistics to ensure the airport is constructed to standard.

"We want to thank the Federal Government for their consideration for agreeing with us, so that we can work together to give our people a befitting airport", the governor stated.

He said that his administration had started implementation of the recommendation of the white paper report of the

visitation panel of Abia State University Uтуру (ABSU), and promised to implement all recommendations to the later, to enable the institution stand out in the comity of tertiary institutions across the country.

"We are following the White Paper of the visitation panel. A new Management is in place in Abia State University and the recommendations that were given in the White Paper will be implemented by the Government to the latter", Otti assured.

Governor Otti who detailed of his administration's commitment to road rehabilitation and expansion, said his government is determined to improve connectivity across the state, adding that few more roads will be flagged off before the end of the year.

NDDC Equitable Treatment Of Niger Delta Communities

From Aligwe Stella PH

Director Community and Rural Development of the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC, Mr. Theophilus Allagoa, has assured that the present leadership of the NDDC, will ensure that no community is left behind in the scheme of things, explaining that all communities in the Niger Delta region would be treated fairly by the commission.

Allagoa, who disclosed this recently, when a delegation of Niger Delta groups from Bonny led by the Chairman of Concerned Citizens of Bonny, Mr. Victor Ibaningo, paid him a courtesy visit in his office in Port Harcourt, assured the people of Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State, that the Commission will complete all ongoing projects and

initiate new ones on the island. He added that the commission was also engaging with relevant stakeholders to streamline projects meant for Bonny to avoid duplication of efforts.

Speaking further, Allagoa, charged them to exercise patience, as Bonny Island deserves the attention of relevant stakeholders given its strategic place; while maintaining that the Bonny

Ring Road and other projects were already receiving attention being that discussions were in progress.

Earlier in his speech, Chairman of Concerned Citizens of Bonny, Mr. Victor Ibaningo, who was accompanied by Emmanuel Bristol-Alagbarigha, former Secretary -General of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Peter Kaladappa, Commander of the Ijaw

Defense Council (IDC), and Precious Jumbo, Chairman of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) Bonny Chapter, called on the attention of the NDDC to the plight of the Bonny people.

However, he expressed dismayed owing to the fact that irrespective of its considerable contributions to the nation's economy, especially the NDDC, Bonny LGA lacked sufficient Federal Government

development footprint, urging the Commission to review its disposition to the area.

Moreso, he pleaded with the Managing Director of the NDDC, Dr Samuel Ogbuku, to ensure that Bonny Local Government Area was not shortchanged in the Commission's project distribution.

News

Connak Foundation Installs Solar Streetlights, Borehole At School For The Blind

By Okereke Kate and Ekebusi Precious

With the vision of creating opportunities and changing lives, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Connak Foundation, has provided help to the School, for the Blind, Afarakuwu Umuahia.

Connak Foundation which started in 2012, by Mr Ken Nnamdi Ukeagu, was founded to combat the scourge of youth unemployment that has cast shadows of discord and idleness across local communities and as well, create a world where communities would be empowered.

During a visit to the school, Connak Foundation commissioned solar-powered streetlights and a borehole, while also donating essential supplies, including bags of rice, beans, tubers of yam, groundnut oil, cartons of tin tomatoes, cartons of noodles, and medical aid to meet the daily needs of the school's staff and students.

In his speech on behalf of the foundation, Mr. Ifeanyi Nnaji, explained that the foundation chose to help the school due to its poor condition and the unique challenges it faces. He shared that their previous visit to the school had been distressing, which motivated their decision to return and address some of the school's fundamental needs.

According to him, the foundation is inspired by the school's resilience and dedication to learning, against all odds, stating that providing essential resources and infrastructure, would help improve their educational experience as well, as contribute to their overall well-being.

"Our donation of these food items and materials is to support your daily needs, while the solar-powered streetlights and borehole facility will help to improve the safety and sustainability of the school environment", he said.

Nnaji, however, encouraged the students to continue in reaching for the stars, allowing their curiosity guide them, embracing the power of knowledge. He said with dedication and hardwork they can overcome any challenges.

He also announced to the people of Abia that the Connak Foundation's Children Christmas Funfair would be held from December 27 to 29, 2024, as part of the foundation's efforts to give back to the community.

In an interview, the principal of the school, Mrs. Onyegaziri Bernadette Nnenna, expressed gratitude to Connak Foundation for its donation of food items, which she said would significantly help sustain the school. She explained that the school had run out of supplies and was concerned about how they would continue feeding the students, as they provide meals three times a daily.

While thanking Connak Foundation for its generosity, the principal emphasised the need for further support, particularly from the government and urged that the school be included in the government's monthly budget.

The principal also highlighted the poor condition of the school's infrastructure, noting that the roofs of their buildings were severely damaged and the dormitory floor was in disrepair.

"The floor of our dormitory is in bad shape and needs to be tiled. The roofs are leaking and beyond repair; they need to be replaced," she further stated.

She appealed to individuals and organizations to continue supporting the school. She expressed her appreciation for the assistance the school had already received from the government, Connak Foundation and other kind-hearted donors.

Nigerians Paid N2.23trn In Ransom Payments In One Year, Says NBS

Nigerians paid N2.23trn as ransom to kidnapers in twelve months. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), said the payments were made between May 2023 and April 2024.

According to the NBS's latest Crime Experience and Security Perception Survey report published recently, 65 per cent of households affected by kidnapping paid ransoms for the release of their loved ones from the abductors' den.

"The average amount paid as ransom was 2,670,693, with an estimated total ransom of 2,231,772,563,507 paid within the reference period," the NBS report read.

It said kidnapping incidence was estimated at 2,235,954 nationally with results showing that rural areas (1,668,104) recorded more kidnappings than urban areas (567,850).

"Further analysis by zones revealed that North-West had the highest cases (1,420,307), followed by North-Central (317,837), while the least was recorded in South-East (110,432)," it said.



Over 20 Brand New Toyota Hilux Trucks, Purchased By The State Government To The Various Security Agencies In The State

Governor Otti Hands Over 20 Hilux Trucks To Security Agencies

By Amarachi Uzoikwu

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has handed over 20 brand new Toyota Hilux trucks, purchased by the state government to the various security agencies in the state.

The initiative which highlights the present administration's commitment to enhancing security across the state, also underscores the government's commitment in maintaining the progress achieved in fostering a peaceful and secure environment for all residents, particularly during the Yuletide season.

Speaking at the handover, in Umuahia, Governor Otti, who commended the efforts of the various security agencies, reaffirmed his administration's commitment to combating all forms of criminality and ensuring peace in the state.

The governor explained that the 20 Hilux trucks, bought by the state government for the various security agencies in the state, is aimed at ensuring, "seamless operations", for law enforcement.

"When we assumed the leadership of this state, 18 months plus a few days ago, we made it very clear that security was topmost on our agenda.

"We understood clearly that every other thing that we wanted to do would amount to nothing if security was compromised.

"We took a decision that we needed to support the security agencies with vehicles and other equipment to ensure that their job is seamless.

"It is in redemption of that promise that we have gathered today to hand over 20 brand new Toyota Hilux trucks, purchased by the state government to our security agencies.

"This is a way of appreciating the job you do. It is also a way of arming you so that you would be more effective and efficient", the governor stated.

The governor highlighted his administration's achievements in improving security since assumption of office, including the launch of Operation Crush, noting that the interagency operation has played a critical role in tackling crime and restoring safety in areas previously overrun by criminals, particularly in Isuikwuato and Umunneochi Councils.

He revealed that towns and villages, previously inaccessible, due to the activities of kidnapers and armed robbers, have been reclaimed, thereby allowing residents to return to their communities.

"People who could not access their villages in several years were able to access their villages and actually spent Christmas last year in their villages and since then, we have continued to do the needful to ensure that our state is peaceful", the governor further stated.

While acknowledging

isolated incidents involving criminals infiltrating the state, the governor assured the public that his administration remains steadfast in its resolve to address security challenges.

He disclosed that the state had rejigged its security architecture and warned that Abia State would no longer be a safe haven for anyone who chooses to operate outside the law.

"We want to repeat that warning we gave that this place will not be accommodating to people who do not want to live according to the dictates of the law", he said.

Governor Otti, who emphasised that his administration's unwavering support to security agencies in the state, however, urged them to uphold professionalism. He warned against misconduct, including extortion and the unlawful treatment of citizens.

"I want to also use this opportunity to tell our security agencies that this government is single minded in supporting you and you should go about doing what you have to do, knowing very well that you have a government that will support you 100 per cent.

"We also need to implore you to ensure that at this time, when we have redoubled security that your men are warned so that they don't also get involved with

criminality, including extortion, and dealing with people in a way that is not in accordance with the law", he stated.

Responding on behalf of other security agencies, the Commander, 14 Brigade, Ohafia, Brigadier General O.O. Diya, expressed gratitude to the governor for his unwavering support of the state's security architecture.

Gen. Diya assured that all security agencies would intensify efforts to maintain Abia as a model of safety and security for other states to emulate. He employed citizens to co-operate with law enforcement agencies to rid the state of all forms of crime and criminality.

Speaking in an interview with the National Ambassador, the Commandant of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), in Abia State, Akinsola Aderemi, and the Special Adviser to the Governor on Security Matters, Navy Commander MacDonald Uba (rtd), lauded the state government for its commitment to security enhancement. They stressed that the synergy among all security agencies would ensure a safer environment for residents.

They assured citizens that security forces are fully prepared to respond to any threats, and called on the public to co-operate with the agencies in identifying suspicious activities.

Entertainment

Why Men Prefer Less Attractive Women - Cardi B

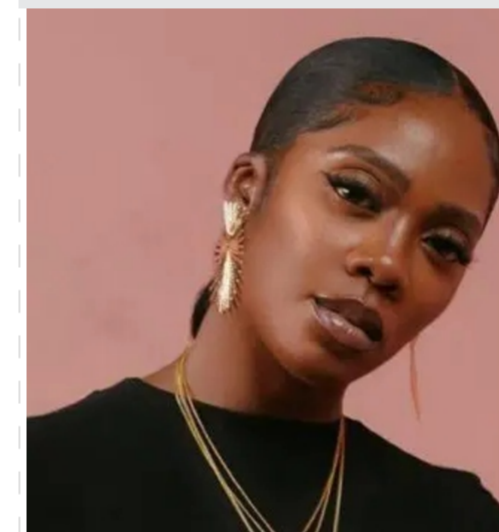
American rapper, Cardi B, shed more light on her claim via X, Cardi B explained that the live stream was about "how men are intimidated by women that make their own money because they are not as easy to control...and how a man told me why he rather dates 6 and not 10s."

She made the claim during a recent social media livestream.

"Men prefer less attractive women because they are more submissive than perfect 10s," Offset, over infidelity



God Delayed My Success - Tiwa Savage



Nigerian singer Tiwa Savage has said there's a divine reason for the delay in her career breakthrough.

In a recent episode of The Receipts podcast, the 44-year-old music star strongly expressed her belief that God delayed her success for a purpose.

According to her, God delayed her success to encourage other women who are less successful at

an early age. She said, "I feel like God has done this on purpose. God delayed my success for a purpose. I used to be like, why wasn't I successful in my twenties? I started succeeding in my thirties.

"It's to bless other people. It's to bless that 25-year-old girl who's scared about what the future holds. If she opens my page and sees that I started in my thirties, she would be like, 'I still have time.'"

I Was Very Naive At Beginning Of My Career - Tems.

Grammy-winning Nigerian singer, Temilade Openiyi, popularly known as Tems, has opened up about the early journey of her career.

The 'Essence' crooner admitted that she was extremely naive at the beginning of her career.

In an interview with Glamour Magazine Germany, Tems explained that it took her time to learn how to navigate the music industry positively.

"I don't want to lie. I was very naive at the beginning of my career - I just wanted to make good art. I had to learn how to navigate the music business in a healthy way," she said.



Tems shared that her management and family have been her backbone. "I would say that it is both my management and my family that keep me grounded. Especially my

Drop your lies' - Bimbo Ademoye

Drop your lies' - Bimbo Ademoye reacts to Toyin Abraham's claim of new house, car.

Nigerian actress, Bimbo Ademoye has debunked Toyin Abraham's claim that she recently acquired a new car and a house.

Toyin Abraham's had during the premiere of 'Alakada! Bahd and Boujee' announced Ademoye's latest achievements.

Addressing the audience, Abraham said "Bimbo just bought a house and a car. Latest Benz."

In the viral video, the announcement drew a swift reaction from actress Ini Edo, who immediately tapped Abraham on the shoulder and said "who send you?"

However, responding to the claims on her Instagram post Ademoye denied it, saying Abraham was lying. Speaking in pidgin English, she joked about not being at such a financial level and blamed Toyin's movie character 'Yetunde Animashun' as being the culprit.

"Yetunde Animashun paroku. She even dropped one lie last night at the premiere of #AlakadaBadandBoujee. House and car where, wey I never chop belleful.



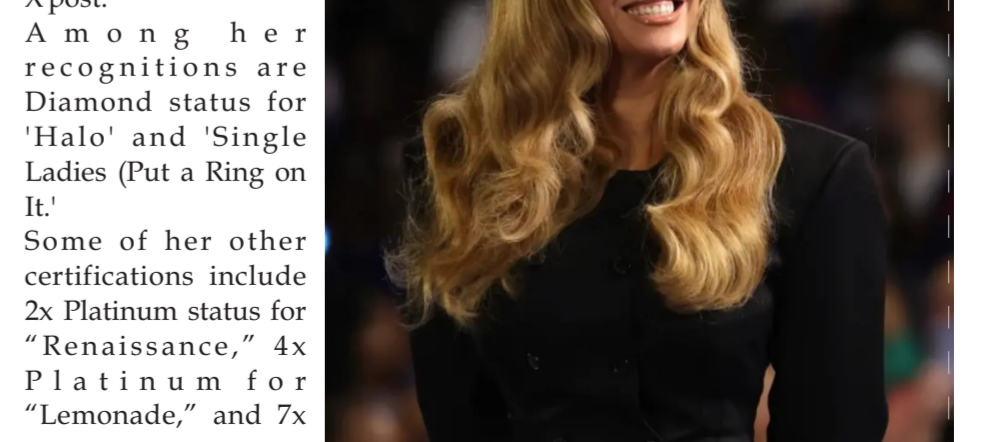
Beyoncé Becomes Most RIAA Certified Female Artist Of All Time.

Famous singer, Beyoncé, has become the most certified female artist of all time by the Recording Industry Association of America, RIAA.

She earned the most RIAA-certified titles of all time by a female artist after a couple of her songs recently received certifications, bringing her total to 103.

"Crowning achievement! Congratulations to Beyoncé, who now holds the record for the most certified titles for a female artist in RIAA history, including her first two Diamond singles! parkwoodcolumbiarecords," RIAA announced in an Xpost.

Among her recognitions are Diamond status for 'Halo' and 'Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)'. Some of her other certifications include 2x Platinum status for "Renaissance," 4x Platinum for "Lemonade," and 7x





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Editorial

Benefits Of An Airport In Abia State

On Tuesday December, 17th, 2024, the ever proactive Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti (OFR) in company of the Federal Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Barrister Festus Keyamo (SAN) jointly performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the New Abia Airport at Nsulu, Isiala-Ngwa North Local Government Area (LGA).

The Airport project, to say the least and without sounding immodest, is an unforgettable legacy project because of its attendant economic, social and political benefits to Abia State.

'What is the benefit of an Airport to Abia State?' The uninformed political opponents and cynics, will be asking.

We want to tell them that the benefits are too numerous to be catalogued in one newspaper Editorial Comment. Starting from the quotes of Brainy, 'An Airport opens the global common use market to all interested participants on the same basis'. For Abia State, it will open the state to global markets, which will automatically and seamlessly boost the state's economy and shore up its Internally Generated Revenue (IGR).

As a legacy project of Dr. Otti, in partnership with the Federal Government, the Airport will transform the state's transport system by 'enhancing connectivity through air travel.'

The Airport project, right from its take-off stage (clearing the land, setting up the buildings and other structures) - to its full realization, will create job opportunities for Abians and non-Abians resident in the state.

An Airport in Abia will offer the state the

opportunity to collaborate with multi-lateral partners, the Federal Government and its agencies, sister-states, business organizations, global as well as local and international individuals who have something of value to do in Abia State.

According to Festus Keyamo, the Airport will position Abia state as a commercial and industrial hub of the South-East Region. He emphasized that the Airport will unlock the state's full economic potentials as an industrial hub and will facilitate the direct export of goods produced in the region.

Furthermore, the coming of an Airport to Abia state will usher in diverse urbanization and development projects such as building of an Airport City, rehabilitation of Nsulu Games Village, establishment of hotels and other recreational facilities to boost tourism and other business establishments which will further boost the state's IGR.

The Airport project is also a major step being taken by the Governor to diversify the state's economy from heavy dependence on the Federation Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC).

The Governor stated that the volume of investments the state anticipates, and the projected influx of high network individuals for business, conferences, workshops and other events, including holidays, picnics, justify the decision to embark on the project.

We join His Excellency, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, OFR to thank the land donor communities of Ubaha, Umuala, Ikputu, Umuisu, Umuezeukwu, Umuode and Umuomainta - Nvosi, for their generosity and support for the project.

We equally stand behind the Governor for his appreciation of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for consenting to Governor Otti's appeal to convert the project, which was originally conceptualized as an Airstrip, to a full-fledged International Airport.

Kudos must also go to; Minister of Aviation and Aerospace, Barr. Festus Keyamo for his support, the Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Okezie Kalu, the Minister of State for Labour, Hon. Nkiruka Onyejeocha among others for their efforts towards ensuring that the Airport Project comes into fruition.

LETTERS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:
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The Scourge Of Inflation In Nigeria

Dear Editor

As I write this letter, millions of Nigerians are struggling to make ends meet due to the crippling effects of inflation. The recent surge in price of essential commodities has left many families or society bearing the brunt.

The National Bureau of Statistics latest report indicates that Nigeria's inflation rate has risen to an alarming rate of 34.60% as of November 2024. This trend is not only eroding the purchasing power of citizens but also strifling economic growth.

The government must take action to address the root causes of inflation, including foreign exchange crises, fuel subsidy removal and monetary policy misstep. It is essential that the policy makers adopts a more detailed approach in managing the economy, one that balances the need of fiscal discipline with the imperative to protect the most vulnerable members of the society.

I urge the government to consider the following measures to mitigate the effects of inflation.

Implement in infrastructure development to improve productivity and reduce costs.

Implement policies to produce food production and reduce reliance on imports. Implement a more transparent and efficient monetary policy framework.

Provide targeted support to vulnerable populations, such as poor and the elderly

By implementing all these target solutions, Nigeria can mitigate the effects of inflation and foster sustainable economic growth.

By Harbor Princess Ugochinyere



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Focus

Tinubu And The Future of ECOWAS

By Reuben Abati

Two major meetings were held over the weekend that just passed that have implications for the future of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the possible resolution or otherwise of political developments among member-states in the last two to three years, with implications for the future of the sub-regional organization. ECOWAS was established in May 1975, when 15 West African States signed the Treaty of Lagos to establish a platform for the promotion of economic integration. This particular treaty was revised on July 24 1993, but the essential purpose of ECOWAS has remained consistent: trade facilitation, free movement of persons and goods, solidarity, promotion of human rights and peace. The sixteenth member joined in 1977, making the membership 16. In addition to its many guidelines and principles, ECOWAS has a general framework which also guides protocols and relations among members. In July 1991, it adopted the Declaration of Political Principles as a cardinal rule, and in 2001, the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. One of those protocols is the underlying trigger for this commentary, to wit: the principle of customary international law enshrined in Article 2 (4) of the 1945 UN Charter which binds member-states against the use of force as a means of changing governments, in the absence of armed attack or self-defence. In 1978, ECOWAS signed a protocol on non-aggression against member states and in 1981, members agreed that in the event of any act of aggression against a member, they would come together in mutual self-defence and protect the victim-state to ensure peace, security and stability, by military means if possible and if inevitable, as seen in the interventions of ECOMOG in Liberia (1990) and Sierra Leone (1998). Even the African Union (AU) enabled by its Article 4(h) can be called upon to intervene when the basic protocols have been breached. This however is a slightly complicated area of the subject which we need not bring into this commentary.

What we know is that ECOWAS specifically sees pro-democratic intervention as its bounden duty, but the effectuation of this has been a problem in the sub-region over the years and to cite a recent example, in 2016, when ECOWAS threatened to deploy a standby ECOWAS force in The Gambia to restore the people's wish if Yahya

Jammeh refused to leave office. Jammeh was eased out and a standby force did not have to intervene. But a turning point came for ECOWAS when the military seized power in Mali in 2020 and 2021, Guinea in 2021, Burkina Faso in 2022, and Niger in July 2023. ECOWAS, with Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu as Chair, thought it needed to intervene to return these countries to democracy, the rise of military juntas in the sub-region being a threat to democratic consolidation. ECOWAS suspended the states in line with its protocols and proceeded to impose political and economic sanctions. It threatened to deploy troops if it became necessary. This was an act of political miscalculation.

In the four countries, there were civilian protests against ECOWAS, particularly in former French colonies of Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. The more interesting part of it is that the ECOWAS was accused of being too pro-French. In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, the people publicly denounced continued association with France and specifically in Niger, the people openly waved Russian flags and pulled down French flags. From Senegal to Niger, a wave of rebellion erupted in the former colonies, in what signalled a creeping failure of French relations with its former colonies in Africa. Senegal has had to shut down French military bases to assert its sovereignty, in Burkina Faso the military junta revoked gold permits that had been awarded to French companies, in Niger, the government similarly cancelled the mining permit of Orano, the French nuclear producer that runs the Uranium mines in that country. In addition, Niger revoked its tax co-operation treaties with France as also did Mali, which broke off from its defence accord with France, and its 11 colonial agreements with the former overlord. In the vacuum created by these new realities, Russia and the Wagner group became the favourite partner of former French colonies in West Africa. The Sahel region has been a hotbed of violence and terrorism and naturally, there were concerns about the implications of the presence of Russia and Wagner in the sub-region and the festering anti-West sentiments in the backyard of ECOWAS members. ECOWAS eventually had to review its threat of sanctions, and military action and adopted the options of diplomacy and dialogue. This achieved little or nothing. In January 2024, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger announced their decision to quit ECOWAS. They formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) as their own

confederation as an alternative to ECOWAS. Their departure under Article 91 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty would become effective on January 29, 2025. The resort to diplomacy, an afterthought by ECOWAS also yielded no results. In July, ECOWAS appointed President Bassirou Faye of Senegal as the mediator with the aggrieved countries. President Faure Gnassingbe of Togo was also sent on diplomatic shuttles to Niger. President Tinubu as ECOWAS Chairman, also sent other envoys to the Sahel. Barely a month to the January deadline, there was a meeting of Ministers of Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali in Niamey last Saturday, December 14, where they reiterated that the departure of the three countries from ECOWAS, effective January 29, 2025 is "irreversible." They however also resolved that the three countries would remain visa-free for all ECOWAS countries after the exit. While the latter resolution may alleviate fears about the free movement of goods and services, there is still the residual challenge of insecurity in the Sahel, and the threat of a further tumultuous season in that part of West Africa with wider implications for regional peace. It is perhaps out of this realization that the Authority of Heads of State and Governments at its 66th Ordinary on December 15 at the State House in Abuja, decided to vary Article 91 of the Revised Treaty and granted the departing trio an extension of six months from January 29 to July 29. This is basically to create room for further diplomatic negotiations in the hope that the three countries can be brought back into the fold. In Niamey, on Saturday, the AES Ministers still made it clear that ECOWAS leaders are too subservient to France. Without being specific, they may well have been referring to President Tinubu who recently returned from France where he was treated to a

lavish and grand reception by President Emmanuel Macron. It remains to be seen whether the AES would reverse itself. It is a long wait but as certain as daylight, July 29, 2025 would soon be upon us. In the meantime, the ECOWAS Commission has been directed to begin work on the necessary withdrawal formalities, while the mediator continues with last-ditch efforts to keep the dream of the founding fathers of ECOWAS alive, giving the AES an opportunity to have a re-think.

It is further instructive that at the ECOWAS meeting of Heads of States and Governments, President Tinubu, Chairman, took time out to praise the just concluded general elections in Ghana and parliamentary elections in Senegal. He even praised Ghana's Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) who conceded defeat to the candidate of the opposition, President John Mahama of the National Democratic Congress (NDC). He praised the government and people of Ghana for their maturity. This was a subtle dig at the leaders of the West African countries where the military chose to resort to force and aggression. Without a doubt, the rise of military juntas poses a threat to democracy in West Africa and peace in the region. The romance of the juntas with Russia and China dangerously positions the region as a territory for proxy conflicts among major Western powers. It is an ill-wind. ECOWAS needs to do more to persuade the errant countries to restore constitutional order. The leaders also need to reinvent and retool the organization. By next July, it will be 50 years since ECOWAS was established. It would be pertinent to ask: how has the body fared? Has it so far fulfilled the ambitions of its founding fathers? Today, only one of those leaders who established ECOWAS in 1975 is still alive. Would General

Yakubu Gowon of Nigeria be proud of what ECOWAS has become? What are the challenges facing the body? How can it be reformed? Mutual suspicion among the various blocs: Anglophone, Francophone and the Lusophone has been a major issue for ECOWAS: how can the goal of integration be better realized? In 50 years, whatever the challenges may have been, it can be said that ECOWAS has been pivotal in forging cooperation, integration and trade within the region. ECOWAS in 2010 adopted Vision 2020, and also later a Vision 2050 roadmap to deepen the original objectives of the association. There may have been challenges: insecurity in the Sahel, Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, Ebola, COVID-19 and the emergent threat of military juntas, but on the whole, the main achievements of the body deserve to be celebrated. ECOWAS fought to restore peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and has been vocal in insisting on good governance. There are hitches in person-to-person relations within the body, over trade, commerce and space, but the free movement of goods and services has been largely beneficial. ECOWAS ranks probably as the most successful regional economic bloc in the continent, in terms of conflict management.

But ECOWAS has lost steam. It needs re-organization. It is unfortunate that the same ECOWAS that acted decisively in Liberia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia is now the same body that is now being treated scornfully by a group of military adventurists who have reversed democratic progress in the Sahel. Their effrontery is fuelled by the descent into poverty and anomie in their countries. The clamour for change that compelled the people of Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea and Niger to embrace the military is simply their frustration with the leaders in those countries. The people seek change and they embrace it in whatever shape it presents itself, with high expectations too, because they no longer trust their leaders who have alienated them and placed a greater accent on their own elite well-being rather than the common good for the people's benefit. The people are led by persons who promote injustice, inequality, nepotism. They rig elections and do not allow the people's vote to count. When the military intervenes, the people see the intervention as a form of liberation from the shackles of oppression. In Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, they trooped to the streets in jubilation, almost like the situation today in Syria with the fall of Bashar Assad and

the Assad dynasty, one of the most murderous ruling houses in the Middle East which clung to power for 54 years. In Mali in August 2020, when Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was removed in a military coup over allegations of corruption, fraud and electoral violence, the people were joyous. They carried placards saying "This isn't a coup. It is a Revolution". There was yet another coup in May 2021. Similarly in Niger in 2023, thousands of people gathered to hail the generals who led the coup in that country. The urgent matter that West Africa needs to resolve is the challenge of good leadership and governance.

There is a need at the organizational level for a re-dedication to the ideals of ECOWAS, and to develop a higher sense of belonging among the member-states and the over 420 million people that make up the region. As ECOWAS steps into its 50th year, it is in urgent need of reform and we need to see the members being faithful. At the last meeting of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of States and Governments, Omar Aliou Touray, President of the ECOWAS Commission, commended Nigeria for having paid up its community levies for 2023, with the 2024 levy paid up to July this year. He advised other member states to emulate Nigeria's example. I guess it has become a habit among ECOWAS members to allow Nigeria to do the heavy lifting in terms of funding while others tag along and yet enjoy the benefits of membership. It is important that all parties pay their levies as and when due. The various structures of the body must be overhauled to ensure equity and deepen trade facilitation. The ideals of free movement of persons across the region should be enhanced. It must be possible for any national of an ECOWAS state to live and work in any of the member states without being subjected to undue discrimination or harassment. The celebration of ECOWAS at 50 must be an occasion for sober reflection and renewal. President Bola Tinubu was elected for a second term as Chairman of ECOWAS in July 2024. He would preside over the 50th anniversary celebrations before handing over the seat in July 2025. He may have listed some of his achievements as ECOWAS Chairman at the 66th Ordinary session in Abuja; he would be required to give a fuller account of his tenure and the status of ECOWAS as part of the 50th anniversary. There is a lot more that can be done.

ECOWAS, with Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu as Chair, thought it needed to intervene to return these countries to democracy, the rise of military juntas in the sub-region being a threat to democratic consolidation.

News

MOUAU Alumni Holds Dinner, Honours Personalities

By Harbor Ugochinyere

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike (MOUAU), Alumni Association, Umuahia Chapter has held their Annual End of the year dinner party, with notable personalities honoured at the event.

Speaking at the event, the Global President, MOUAU Alumni Association, Dr. Obasi Igwe Oscar, urged MOUAU graduates to identify with the body at their various chapters.

This, he said, provides a platform for graduates to connect with each other, fostering professional relationships and collaborations.

The Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics, who lauded MOUAU Alumni Umuahia chapter for their consistency, further

revealed that the alumni body also contributes to community development through volunteer work, charitable donations among other initiatives, adding that they also offer mentorship and guidance to current students and young professionals among others. In his opening remark, the Chairman, MOUAU Alumni Association, Umuahia Chapter, Dr. Onyekachi Uwalaka thanked members of the group for being steadfast and supportive towards achieving the aims and objectives of the group.



Dr. Christopher Okoro, being conferred with an honour

Dr. Uwalaka also thanked the awardees for distinguishing themselves in various field of endeavours, hence, the need to honour them with various categories of awards.

Contributing, the immediate past National President, MOUAU Alumni Association, Pastor John Ikpegbu commended members for providing a voice for the institution in the community and beyond, urging them to foster collaborations and research opportunities for its members.

Meanwhile, one of the awardees who bagged Distinguished Alumnus 2024 and the Rector, Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnics, Dr. Christopher K. Okoro, thanked MOUAU Alumni Association for the honour, adding that he would not take it for granted.

Speaking further on behalf his fellow awardees, Dr. Okoro said: "This honour is not just a recognition but also a tribute to the values of hard work, perseverance and dedication that our university instills in its students."

"We will continue to cherish this forever and strive to continue making our alma mater proud."

In his vote of thanks, the Vice Chairman, MOUAU Alumni Association, Umuahia Chapter and

the Head, Organizing Committee, Dr. Peter-Damian Jiwuba, thanked the awardees for making the alumni association proud, maintaining that the group would continue to facilitate strategic partnerships between the university and external organizations.

Other Distinguished awardees 2024 include: Hon. Obinna Okereke, Dr. C. Kadurumba, Comrade Ejike Urama, while Friends of the Alumni 2024 category were: Dr. E.B. Onwujiariri, Comrade Okoro Johnbosco Chukwuma and Comrade Ahanonu Jackson.

Sports Xtra

Ademola Lookman and the Journey for African Best

By Okechukwu Ubani

As the scene was set for the prestigious awards ceremony to celebrate outstanding achievements in African football, the prospect of Ademola Lookman being named Africa's Footballer of the Year appeared tantalizingly close. However, a twist of fate loomed as the Confederation of African Football (CAF) hinted that the voting was "too close to call", raising the possibility that Lookman could miss out on the accolade that many felt was rightfully his.

In a departure from tradition, CAF announced that all five nominees for the FOTY prize would attend, creating a buzz in Moroccan social media circles and among spectators in Marrakech's Palais des Congrès. The speculation intensified over whether Lookman, who had been the frontrunner, might be overshadowed by Achraf Hakimi of Paris Saint-Germain. Hakimi, having clinched a Ligue 1 title with PSG and performing admirably with Morocco at the Olympics, posed a significant challenge. The echo of past selections wherein CAF seemed to prioritize club performance in leagues like the Premier League over continental success, only added fuel to the fire of doubt. Familiar patterns resurfaced when recalling the historic near-misses of legends like Mohamed Aboutrika, who watched the award slip through his fingers despite a stellar year. Instances like Jay-Jay Okocha's unexpected omission in 1998 and John Obi Mikel's snub in 2013 illustrated CAF's controversial decision-making process regarding the FOTY.

Yet, as Lookman stood victorious on the podium, it was clear that no such misjudgment had marred his well-



turning point, as Lookman flourished in the Serie A, achieving double figures in goals for the first time. His standout season included a historic hat-trick in the Europa League final, etching his name in the record books as the first African player to score three goals in such a match.

With Atalanta qualifying for the Champions League and Lookman establishing himself as a key player, the award felt like the cherry on top of an impressive season. He continued to dazzle, racking up goals and assists while earning accolades at both club and national levels.

Despite being unable to lead Nigeria to an Africa Cup of Nations victory, Lookman's performance was pivotal in their journey to the final, earning him a spot on the Team of the Tournament. Yet, he remained acutely aware of the expectations placed upon him in a landscape filled with past winners who achieved major club and international titles.

Nonetheless, Lookman's journey itself is an inspiring tale of resilience. The recognition of his achievements, against the backdrop of previous winners' records, positions him as a worthy recipient of the award, and perhaps heralds a new era of talent on the continent.

Looking ahead, as Atalanta leads the Serie A, Lookman seems poised for further accolades, even as he faces stiff competition. Players like Salah, Osimhen, and Hakimi remain formidable challengers, set against the backdrop of an AFCON year where the stakes will be high. With a promising trajectory ahead, Lookman's story continues, filled with potential for even greater achievements in the seasons to come.

deserved recognition. He became the 40th recipient of the award and joined the ranks of Nigerian greats like Rashidi Yekini and Victor Osimhen.

"This award is a blessing; to be recognized as the best player in Africa is something incredible," Lookman told ESPN. Reflecting on a career that had seen him grapple with setbacks, he added, "Four years ago, my career felt down but now I'm here as the best player in Africa. Don't let your failures stop your dreams."

From humble beginnings in Wandsworth, Lookman navigated a tumultuous career path filled with ups and downs. Despite the promise shown as a young player at Everton, he struggled to find his footing. Multiple loan spells—most notably with RB Leipzig, Fulham, and Leicester—brought glimpses of his talent but seldom the consistency expected from a player of his caliber.

His pivotal switch to Atalanta in 2022 proved to be a

Wisdom for Living

with
Ezewuru Adaeze Mary

Many of life's failure are experienced by those who never knew how close they were to success before giving up... there is more to life than counting losses, perseverance is a virtue to covet.

So long as you do not lose your mind, nothing is beyond repair.

Ensure sanity of your mind, stay focus pursuing your dreams and be your own best friend. Encourage yourself, be your number one fan, no one believes in ideas or intentions but all

celebrate results. So keep at it, do not give up, failure is not the end point rather it signifies a way not to do it next time and often births a better/appropriate way of doing it to achieve success.

No matter who left you, you can love again. Sometimes love needs a second chance because it wasn't ready on round one, no matter how much you have lost, you can make money again. You can buy another house. You can get another job. You can start another business.

Focus On What is Left Not What Is Lost

It's never too late to make a living.

Focus on what is left – not what is lost. Don't dwell on what went wrong. Focus on what to do next. For a righteous man may fall seven times but he rises up again (Prov 24:16).

Rise above your past! Rise above your failures!! Rise above your storms!!! You will rise again. You are not alone. We will cheer you up. "For the

earnest expectation of the creature wait for the manifestation of the sons of God" Rom 8:19.

Ensure you know and remain with the only true and ever loyal friend - God Almighty, the hope of glory. Our hope in God does not disappoint, for vain is the help of men. Believe in God and yourself, trust in His ability to do more than you might desire likewise inspire His virtues deposited

in you by continually exercising your mind - growing your faith in your ability to succeed. Never give up on hope. If you keep hope alive, it will keep you alive.

Hold on to it, it is possible, every cock passed through an incubator to emerge, as a chick then embraces daily growth (struggles/fights) without giving in to life's challenges so as to become an ancient time manager for human race.

It is not impossible except you stop trying, your emergence as an inventor, a pacesetter and trailblazer is nearer than you can imagine. Celebrate yourself and applaud every milestone, none is insignificant.

Refuse to change what your heart believes because of what your eye is seeing, there's more to purpose in life than the physical.

Once you get the picture, do not let it out of your mind, incubate the idea within your mind and hatch it out with hard-work, diligence, perseverance, and self-confidence.

Strive to become it! Let go of discouragement, fear and negative imagination.

Nothing can stop you, If you don't allow it.

Stop counting losses, you've got some troupes also, take stock of that and be encouraged.

Family Matters

By **Ihuoma Egbeogu**

Infidelity in marriage can be devastating as it often breaks the trust and emotional connection that serve as the foundation of the relationship. Infidelity which is the act of having a romantic or sexual relationship with someone other than one's husband, wife or partner. Infidelity can have a strong impact on the relationship and can lead to depression, guilt, blame and anger.

Coping with infidelity is one of the most challenging situations a relationship can face. It usually springs intense emotional pain, feelings of betrayal and questions about trust and the future of the relationship. Infidelity is a very difficult situation to cope with in marriage.

However, there are several signs which indicates that infidelity may be occurring. These signs tend to give you a clue into what is happening in your marriage.

When there is significant changes in your sex life which portrays your partner being less interested in sex than usual and has difficulty becoming sexually aroused with you. It is a clear sign that infidelity has occurred.

Furthermore, once you observe your partner may want to engage in sexual activities that seem awkward, it's obvious that infidelity is occurring.

Another clue of infidelity is sleeplessness. When you observe that your partner seems not to be sleeping well, it's a sign that infidelity has occurred.

Moreso, when a partner seems unusually distracted and stressed, it's obvious that infidelity has taken place. Sometimes when a partner becomes more private than usual and may demand more privacy, it's enough clue of infidelity occurring in marriage.

In addition, when a partner spends more time away from home or going on longer and more

Coping With Infidelity In Marriage

frequent trips for work or with friends. It's a clear clue that infidelity has occurred.

However, a partner could suddenly become more hostile, reactive, colder than usual and difficult to rapport with. It's a clear sign that infidelity has occurred.

However, there are several causes of infidelity. It often happens because of dissatisfaction within a relationship. When a partner becomes dissatisfied in a relationship, the next thing that crosses their mind is to sought solace elsewhere. Another factor that causes infidelity is addiction to sex or romance. When a partner is addicted to sex, he tends to have an insatiable appetite for sex which will make him indulge in infidelity. Sometimes, a partner may indulge in infidelity because of personality traits. These traits seems to appeal and attract them. Furthermore, a permissive attitude about sex and cultural societal norms about sex and relationship that support infidelity are some reasons for engaging in infidelity.

However, infidelity can have serious impacts on relationships and on the individual involved including those who are cheated on and those who do

Another factor that causes infidelity is addiction to sex or romance. When a partner is addicted to sex, he tends to have an insatiable appetite for sex which will make him indulge in infidelity.

the cheating. Infidelity can leave the people in it feeling highly distressed, depressed and out of sorts. It can cause heightened anxiety, suicidal ideation and signs of past traumatic stress disorder. The person who was cheated on may feel betrayed and suspicious of their spouses activities going forward. They may experience nightmares, flashbacks and may have images of the affair playing in their heads as if on a movie reel. Trust may be severed and difficult to amend. Infidelity can strain or destroy relationships or marriages. It is one of the most common causes of divorce.

Coping with infidelity is a deeply emotional and challenging process. Whether you're trying to heal from the betrayal or deciding how to move forward, it's important to approach the situation with care, support and self-awareness. There are certain ways to imbibe while trying to cope with infidelity.

Firstly, acknowledge your feelings, by allowing yourself to grieve. It's absolutely normal to feel hurt, angry, confused and betrayed.

Secondly, avoid self-blame. The decision to cheat reflects the choice of the unfaithful

Thirdly, seek support by talking to someone you know and trust. Moreso, engaging a professional counselor could be helpful.

Moreso, you could decide to establish boundaries. You could decide whether you need space from your partner to process what happened.

In addition, you may need to get the facts of the infidelity by talking calmly with your partner which entails rebuilding trust.

Finally, accept that healing takes time. Sometimes recovering from infidelity is a gradual process. Be patient with yourself as you navigate this journey.

In conclusion, infidelity is a cancer that is ravaging most homes. It is advised that both the cheater and the cheated should apply caution in handling issues related to infidelity. Save your marriage, save yourself from trauma, live long as life has no duplicate.

News

Foundation Presents Food Items To Widows

By **Ebere Tasie**

It was a moment of joy and excitement for some widows in Abia State, as Sisters Hearts Foundation presented them food items for Christmas celebration.

The foundation, which aimed at empowering widows, donates edible items which include a 10kg bag of rice, 2 tubers of yam, 2litres of vegetable oil, 1 live chicken, a packet of knor cube seasoning, among others for each person.

Addressing the women before the presentation of the items at Ministry of Agriculture Conference Hall in Umuahia, recently the State Co-ordinator, Sisters Hearts Foundation, Abia State chapter, Mrs Grace Gbagi, urged the widows to continue to rely on God and not to look up to any human for sustenance.

While she encouraged the widows to embark on acquiring skills, Mrs Gbagi, disclosed that the foundation had recently empowered some widows with sewing machines, grinding machines, deep freezer refrigerators and supported petty traders with some money for their businesses.

The state Co-ordinator, who commended the widows for doing the much they could, advised them to empower their children with at least the basic education knowledge and urged them to enroll their children on skill acquisition programmes even while still in school as they could do that while on vacation.

Mrs Gbagi, noted that the responsibilities to build a home is bestowed on a woman hence she advised the women to give their children sound moral and spiritual training and also condemned the idea of comparing children with others.

Responding on behalf of other widows, Gift Iyke Nwogu, expressed profound gratitude to the foundation for its kind gesture and promised to heed the advice given to them.

Speaking with the National Ambassador reporter shortly after the presentation, some of the beneficiaries, Happiness Alexander and Glory Iwuchukwu, expressed much happiness for the gift and thank God for remembering them this season and also shower prayers to the organizers of this widows empowerment initiative.

PDP Condemns Suspension Of Council Chairmen

The Edo State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has condemned the illegal suspension of the Chairmen of the 18 Local Government Areas in the state.

The State House of Assembly suspended the Chairmen following the directive of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Governor Okpebholo had earlier written a petition to the House over the refusal of the chairmen to submit financial records of their Local Government to the State Government.

In the letter, the governor, who described the council chairmen's refusal as an act of insubordination and gross misconduct, requested the House to look into the matter.

In a statement by the Edo PDP Caretaker Chairman, Tony Aziyegbemi, the party said that the chairmen and their vice were not given the opportunity to defend themselves describing the suspension as unconstitutional.

"How can a governor direct the state assembly to suspend democratically elected chairmen of the 18 local councils for insubordination when these elected officials enjoy autonomy and independence as enshrined in the Constitution and are not subordinates of the governor, the State Assembly, or any other arm of government?"

"We are also aware that the chairmen and their vices weren't even given the opportunity to be heard in their defence and were suspended unheard on watery trumped-up charges, in total disregard to the Constitution.

The PDP contended that Governor Okpebholo lacked the power to demand the financial statements of the LGA in the light of the Supreme Court judgment granting LGs autonomy. (NAN).



The Governor of Rivers State, Sir Sim Fubara

Fubara Pledges To Execute More Human-oriented Projects In Rivers

From **Nzeuzo Jane, PH**

The Governor of Rivers State, Sir Siminalayi Fubara has promised to execute more human-oriented projects in different parts of the state.

This, he said is borne out of genuine love for the people and not ignited by political consideration.

Governor Fubara who spoke during the commissioning of Bori internal roads project in Khana Local Government Area recently, said he was not deterred by the opposition faced by his administration as God has already fought all the battles on behalf of the State.

The governor emphasized the significance of Bori, (Khana) as the Headquarters of the Rivers South-East Senatorial District, adding that more development projects, will be executed in the area as the success of the Senatorial District is paramount to his administration.

"I am happy to be here today to celebrate with the great people of Khana Local Government Area. Khana is very significant to everyone of us that are from this Senatorial district because it is the political headquarters of the district."

"He said his government did not make any mistakes in completing the internal roads project, stating that it is not about who started it, it is about the interest of the Khana people and the interest of our Senatorial district."

"I am happy that I am here to see the inauguration of this project. Like what the Commissioner said, it is about 13.985 kilometers which is approximately 14 kilometers covering about 23 streets. This is just the first phase one and I can assure you here that we are going to embark on the second phase.

Why are we doing this? We are talking about love for our people. It is not about love because there is something that you are looking for, he stated"

According to him, "My interest in this senatorial district is genuine, not what I intend to get, but I cannot be separated from this senatorial district. The success of this Senatorial district is my success."

The governor said it is unfortunate that some people from the Rivers South-East Senatorial District opted to be pliable tools to undermine his administration's development efforts in the State.

"I feel sorry and pity for those of you who have decided to be agents of destruction especially from this Senatorial district. Ask yourselves, if they loved you, why didn't they better your lives before?"

"Like I will tell all my supporters God is our fighter don't bother yourselves with what you see today. What you should be worried about is what will happen that you don't know or see. But if it is this one, we have already conquered it, he further stated"

He noted that Bori, despite being an old administrative district established during the colonial era is yet to be fully developed to its desired status, and called for concerted efforts to develop the area into a modern cosmopolitan city.

"I want to assure you that we are not limiting our development of this Senatorial district, Bori in particular to only roads, we will give you good hospitals, we will rehabilitate the schools as stated here and we will try our best to bring cottage industries to this place, he said"

Governor Fubara who

appealed to Ogoni people to be more accommodating to strangers to expand the development of the area, called for the continuous support of the people for the success of his administration.

"My appeal to the Ogoni people and the Khana people is, you must be accommodating. Our Polytechnic here used to be the best, but today, if not for the efforts of the Management the institution is already going down everyday."

"You can't develop on your own, people must come, live with you and you accommodate them so that development will come. Please I am appealing to you, you must learn to accommodate strangers so that we can develop Bori, he stated"

He assured that the second phase of the Bori internal roads project will soon be awarded, while schools and cottage industries will be established in the area to create employment and economic growth.

"Like I said I am not limiting the development that will come to this Senatorial district especially Bori/Khana to road. We will take care of schools, ensure that Bori will be the first we will commission the Zonal Hospital. You can see what is going on there. As soon as that hospital is commissioned the issue of healthcare will be solved for this Senatorial district. In the next few months we will be back here to commission the Zonal Hospital, the governor said"

In his Speech, the Special Guest of Honour, Prince Uche Secundus, said he considered it a great honour to be invited by the Rivers State Governor to commission the project.

He recalled how he spent his early years in Bori and expressed appreciation to Governor Fubara for the uncommon transformation in the state and the face lift he has given to Bori through his urban renewal policy.

The former PDP National Chairman commended the Governor for his humility and modest posture which has created the conducive environment for governance to thrive in the state.

"I am very familiar with Bori. It is almost a miracle and wonderful to see this facelift, something we have been yearning for over decades. Today, it has come through. The Governor of Rivers State, with his policy of urban renewal, has taken seriously the fact that we can no longer carry the tag of a one-city state. Therefore, Bori is on its way to becoming a modern city in Nigeria, he stated"

In describing the project, Commissioner for Works, Hon. Eloka Tasie-Amadi, applauded Governor Fubara for his urban renewal programme which saw the reconstruction of 23 roads within Bori town amounting to 13.985 kilometers.

He said the roads cut across several areas in the town to rejuvenate into a city to boost the economy and provide easy access for safety and security.

On his part, the Chairman of Khana Local Government Area, Hon Martins Nwigbo commended the visionary leadership of Gov Fubara for reconstructing the Bori Internal roads describing the event as a historic milestone in the fulfillment of the promise that has not only elevated infrastructural development of the area, but has also rekindled the hope and pride of the people.

According to him, "These projects are testimonies of His Excellency's unwavering commitment to grassroots development and his administration's vision of inclusive governance."

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News



Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member

Gov Diri Charges NYSC Members To Exhibit Good Conduct

From Owuma Goodness - Bayelsa

The Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri, has charged Nigeria Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member, to make very good use of the vast opportunities available, to serve the nations and develop themselves, and impact their host communities.

He further assured Corps members deployed to riverine communities, that his administration is ready to complete access roads that leads to their areas of primary assignments. The Government also, that the state will see to their welfare and security during their service.

Gov. Diri, who was represented by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) Prof. Nimboba Ayawei, gave the assurance during the 2024 Batch C, Stream 1 closing ceremony, held at the NYSC Permanent Orientation Camp, Boro Town, Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area, Bayelsa State, recently.

"The state has one of the best welfare packages for corps members serving in the state and for those who will distinguish themselves in community development service. Every process you have undergone in this orientation has been meticulously designed to toughen and equip you for the responsibilities that await you during your service year. The

journey ahead will demand tenacity and dedication, but I assure you that you are well-prepared", he said.

He encouraged them to be bold during and after their service year. The governor commended them for their remarkable discipline, and steadfast commitment throughout their period of camping. He, however, hailed the leadership and management of the NYSC for their efforts in keeping the vision alive, promoting national unity, cultural exchange and community development.

"In terms of assured prosperity, our government has been deliberate in creating an enabling environment where all Bayelsans and residents can work, invest and relax without any hindrance. "This is one of the safest and most secured states in the Federation. We are actively working to enhance our capacity further. Soon, we will deploy 200 branded-new Close Circuit Cameras and refurbish 50 others across various parts of Yenagoa, strengthening our security architecture to ensure corps Members safety and peace of mind in the state", he stated.

Diri disclosed, that his administration is now working on the three senatorial roads -

Nembe/Brass, Sagbama / Ekeremor/ Agree and Yenagoa /Oporoma/ Ukubie. It means, that, future youth corps members will have easier access to their places of primary assignments and host communities without needing to travel by water anymore.

He encouraged them to avoid any actions that may jeopardize their prospects. He enjoined them not to mortgage their future in exchange of temporary pleasures, be proactive and be decisive in pursuing your goals and aspirations. Whether it is through community development projects, skills acquisition of leadership roles, make a positive impact in the lives of others.

The governor welcomed them to the state and urged them to enjoy the delicacies the state will offer and congratulated them for a successful orientation camp course, and wished them a successful service year. He, thereafter, declared the 2024 Batch C, Stream 1 orientation programme closed therefore,

In her speech, the State Coordinator, Mrs Okpalifo Obiageli Charity, commended the Corps Members and Camp Officials for the co-operation and discipline to ensure a hitch free orientation course and enjoined the corps members to promptly report to their

respective places assigned to.

She charged them to settle down, render quality service to nation, and leave positivity in their respective host communities. She also warned them against engaging in actions and omissions that will put their lives in danger and negatively affect their service year. She cautioned them against the negative use of the social media, traveling across the river without life jacket, and traveling at night.

She stressed the need to take their CDS very serious, and assured them that, the Bayelsa State Government, alongside the NYSC, has put together a reward system for corps members who distinguished themselves during the service year.

She expressed sincere gratitude to the Bayelsa State Government for its commitment to the welfare and security of the Corps Members. She also appreciated collaborating partners and camp officials for their team spirit, and commitment throughout the period of the orientation programme.

Mrs Okpalifo called on all Corps employers and traditional rulers in the state, to ensure that Corps lodges are conducive and secured for them to be safe and comfortable.

INEC Staff Association Seeks Support From Abia Govt

By Okereke Kate

In a move to cushion the economic effects on staff of the Independent National Commission (INEC), the Staff Welfare Association of Abia INEC, has raised a passionate appeal to the Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Otti, to support the association with a bus, that can help convey staff members to work.

Speaking at the Annual General Meeting cum end of the year party, the chairman of the INEC Staff Welfare Association (ISWA), Mazi Collins Eze, said in the face of the economic crunch, where transportation cost is heightened, a transportation support from the government, would help assist workers to come to work regularly and promptly.

At the event which was held at the INEC Media Centre, Mazi Eze, said the association had continuously appealed for a bus from the State Government, but to no avail, stating that he won't relent in bring their need to the fore, knowing its importance.

Eze, while reeling out some of the successes recorded in the past three years of his tenure, said the association succeeded in befitting its secretariat, kept up with its recurrent expenditures, and as well, ensuring successful burial ceremonies for two of their fallen members, who died in active service (Mr. Sunday Imo and Mrs. Chinwenwa Onyekwere).

He said the association was up to date with payment of honorarium to those who celebrated wedding, child dedication ceremonies, burial of their parents, among other events.

According to Mazi Eze, his leadership style is innovative, having invented various means of assisting the members who were in dire financial needs, by providing platforms, soliciting for financial supports on their behalf, commending the timely response of ISWA members to the needs of staff, which he described as the secret behind the success of his administration.

He disclosed that his administration was the first to hold the all encompassing INEC Abia State Solemn Assembly, a programme that provided an atmosphere for spiritual reinvigoration and rejuvenation, while offering time tested lectures on various aspects of their career by Mr. Samuel Anthony, former Head of Department GAP, Rt. Rev Chinedu Okoroafor, the Moderator, Umuahia Synod and Minister in charge of Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Umuahia Parish, the former ISWA chairman, Mr Godwin Nnoke, and others.

"This administration in the cause of the year, had high powered collaboration with INEC management and for the first time in its history, organized send-forth ceremony for retiring staff which served as a time of re-union and sober reflection amongst staff members.

"Let me remind us that the provision of vehicle to and fro for our colleagues in Aba and environs is another brain-child of our administration, which has helped in easing the burden of transportation cost on our members and their large turn-out in this year's party, is an eloquent testimony to the viability and importance of the project, story not completed", he further stated.

Pointing its challenges, Mazi Eze reiterated that the association was confronted with numerous challenges ranging from accommodation, dwindling finances as a result of the retirement of about 32 staff members. "If this continues, there might be need to take another look at our income as an association", he said.

Eze while reminding the members of his tenure that is winding up, having served two tenures, said in the coming year, his leadership will be reviewing the #5000 apportioned for the yearly gift of each member, due to the rising cost of items, adding that if their income improves in the coming years, they would extend such gestures to other parts of the state.

Opposition Party Leaders React To Appeal Court Ruling On Rivers Fund

From Nzeuzor Jane, PH

Some opposition political party leaders want the Rivers State Governor, Siminalaye Fubara, to focus more on governance following the recent Appeal Court ruling.

The Appeal Court in Abuja set aside all orders restraining the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Accountant General of the Federation, from releasing funds to the Rivers State Government.

In an interview with our reporter, the spokesperson of the Labour Party in Rivers State,

Gogo Wellington, said the judgment had reinforced the confidence that Rivers people have in the judiciary.

He said the Appeal Court has given a judgement that gives some level of authenticity to the decisions the Governor has taken, and it therefore, behoves on the Governor to continue to do things that are in consistency with the will of Rivers people, " It is a welcome development for us because we believe that the judiciary

should be the last hope of the common man. So when rulings like this that is consistent with the expectation of the people is granted, it gives us reasons to believe that the judiciary still remains as it should be."

On his part, the Chairman of Zenith Labour Party in the State Benjamin Ogbobula, said as a political party, they deem the judgment as a win-win to the people of the state. Stating that God has begun to disgrace those detractors that

should be the last hope of the common man. So when rulings like this that is consistent with the expectation of the people is granted, it gives us reasons to believe that the judiciary still remains as it should be."

Meanwhile, the Rivers

State Commissioner for Information, Joe Johnson, described the action of those who took Rivers State government to court over fund allocation as judicial terrorism.

He said despite the court case, the State Government is still focused in carrying out several projects. He also said that the government will not abandon the road project because of politics just as people are saying.

According to him "

Despite the challenges and the distraction of the enemies, who I will describe as judicial terrorism, the Governor is focused and working. To say that the governor abandoned a road project because of one person is totally false. The Governor is not structured in that kind of thinking. The government is doing one thing at a time. We cannot cover the entire 23 LGAs in one day. Whatever that is yet to be done, will be done.



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Religion

Exploring Biblical Laws Of Success!

By Bishop David Oyedepo

We discover from scriptures that Biblical laws are simply spiritual laws and are higher than natural laws. As it is written: For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord (Isaiah 55:8). Thus, by engaging spiritual laws, we can suspend and nullify the effects of all other laws. The Bible says: For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

There are quite a number of success theories all over town; but success delivers on laws, not admonitions or exaltations. It is also written: This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Joshua 1:8). This helps us to understand that no one will ever command success without embracing God's commandments. We have to do what the law says before we can command good success. Only when we obey will He set us up on high

above the nations of the earth. What is this foundational law? The Law of Love: The law of love is the anchor law in the school of success as far as the Kingdom of God is concerned. As it is written: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him (1 Corinthians 2:9). That implies that genuine lovers of God are candidates for path finding, pace-setting, trail-blazing order of accomplishments.

Just show me a true lover and I will show you another global giant in the making. For me, my heartbeat for God is my greatest asset. When we become genuine lovers of God, we become candidates for outstanding success. No genuine lover of God ends up a failure; he may be challenged but it is only temporary. He may be confronted and grievously hated, but he will emerge an enviable champion at the end. So, the love of God remains the unquestionable platform for outstanding success.

The Law of Divine Ideas: Divine ideas are treasures of unusual values, which are far above natural and intellectual ideas. They are not mere

religious philosophies. As the saying goes 'Every empire is built on ideas.' However, if natural ideas built empires, then divine ideas will build super empires. A divine idea is eternally superior to every other form of idea. For instance, by divine ideas, Job built a business empire as he became the greatest of all men in the East. Also, by divine ideas, Joseph took over the

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most powerful nation in those days because he was able to discover a means of preserving food for 14 years without the use of chemicals. Furthermore, by divine idea, we are told that Isaac sowed in that land, he waxed great, went forward and became very great and the philistines

envied him (Job 29:4; Genesis 26:12-14). Laws of Spiritual Empowerment: This simply means the law of the Anointing. The Anointing of the Holy Spirit is one of the vital instruments for commanding outstanding success. This is why every destiny is at a risk without it. We saw that picture very clearly in the life of the

Apostles. Initially, they were frustrated and fearful individuals, until they receive the Holy Ghost, Who first destroyed their fear, and gave them supernatural command. Concerning the Apostles, the Bible records: ... when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they

were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

The effect of this was that the Church began to experience several dimensions of outstanding success as almost the whole city was added to the church (Acts 2:38-40). So, every child of God needs the Anointing to fulfil his/her destiny in grand style. Even Jesus, the son of the Most High needed to be empowered, in order to fulfil His mission on earth. Remember, for 30 years, people could not distinguish Him from a carpenter's son. But after He was anointed, His fame went through the entire region (Luke 4:14; 18-20). So, the Anointing is what empowers us for change of levels. Unfortunately, many destinies have been manoeuvred, manipulated, molested and harassed by the enemies because the Anointing to subdue them is absent. Undoubtedly, the enemy will not bow to our religion or the number of scriptures we quote; he will only bow to the power of God at work in us. It takes power to tread upon serpents and scorpions unhurt. This is why

Christianity without power is a frustrated religion (Psalm 66:3; Acts 10:38).

Also, it is important to recognise that empowerment is at a cost; we can't wish our way into it (Luke 14:28). Interestingly, fasting is one of the capital prices paid for empowerment. Thus, we must give our fasting time maximum value by engaging in it for empowerment. As we do so, I see us experiencing outstanding and enviable success, after the order of Christ.

Nevertheless, one step to successful living is being born-again. If you are not born-again, you are not entitled to it. Are you born again? If you are not, this is an opportunity to do so. Simply say the following prayer: Lord Jesus, I come to You today. I am a sinner. Forgive me my sins. Cleanse me with Your precious Blood. Today, I accept You as my Lord and personal Saviour. Thank You Jesus for saving me! Now I know I am born again!

For further reading, please get my books: Success Strategies, Success Systems, Maximising Destiny, Exploring the Secrets of Success.

Foreign News

Poland Is Selling Its Frozen Butter Reserves To Curb Soaring Prices

Poland is selling up to 1,000 metric tons (1,102 tons) of its frozen butter reserves to bring down surging prices ahead of presidential elections in May.

The government's strategic reserves agency announced the butter auction citing significant increases in butter prices worldwide that it blamed on a shortage of milk.

"This emergency

action... should contribute to stabilizing butter prices in the market," the agency said, according to a report by CNN affiliate TVN24, a local commercial news channel.

The agency said it would sell the unsalted frozen spread to businesses in 25-kilogram (55-pound) blocks, for the minimum price of 28.38 zlotys (\$7) per kilo.

That is well below

prices at Biedronka, one of Poland's major supermarket chains. The retailer sells fresh butter for between 39.90-49.95 zlotys (\$9.84-\$12.32), depending on the brand, according to its website. The final selling price in the auction could, however, be higher than the minimum price.

It's not unheard of for governments to tap into emergency reserves in order to boost supply and

bring down prices. While such reserves are typically dominated by foreign currency or commodities such as oil and gold, some countries stockpile products deemed important to local diets. For example, in recent years, China has drawn from its strategic pork reserves and Canada has released stores of maple syrup amid shortages.

Netanyahu Tells Israeli Troops To Stay In Area Of Syria's Mount Hermon Until End Of 2025.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has instructed the country's military to remain in the area of Syria's Mount Hermon until at least the end of 2025, a source with knowledge of the matter told CNN.

Israel captured the strategically important mountain, Syria's highest peak, following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime to a rebel-led coalition earlier this month. Israeli officials including Netanyahu had initially characterized the advance as a temporary security measure.

The source said Netanyahu's order was intended to keep forces in place long enough for the political-security situation in Syria to stabilize. He is also waiting, the source said, for clarity on whether Syria's new leaders intend to honor a 1974 agreement that created a buffer zone along the shared border, on which Mount Hermon's summit sits. Until the takeover, the summit was demilitarized and patrolled by UN peacekeepers - their highest permanent position in the world.

Seven Hotel Guests Suffer Suspected Poisoning After Drinking Cocktails At 5-star Fiji Resort

Four Australians, along with three other people believed to be foreign nationals, were taken to the hospital after being served drinks made at a bar at the Warwick Fiji

The tourists, ages 18 to 56, suffered nausea, vomiting and "neurological symptoms," according to a statement from Fiji's Health Ministry.

The two remained in Lautoka Hospital's intensive care unit in a stable condition. The others had been discharged, according to Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister Viliame R. Gavoka.p

The case comes just weeks after six tourists died from methanol poisoning in Laos, in a case that prompted safety warnings about consuming alcohol abroad.

Asked whether methanol was to blame, Dr. Jemesa Tudravu, permanent secretary for Fiji's Ministry of Health and Medical Services, said it was too soon to tell.

We don't have the results of the investigation yet and we don't know if it was spiking or any other



Syria's new leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, better known by his nom de guerre Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, accused Israel of crossing "the lines of engagement" with its actions in Syria. Meanwhile, several Arab states have accused Israel of exploiting instability in Syria to execute a land grab and "occupy more Syrian territories."

Netanyahu however has doubled down on the security need for control of the area saying that "Israel will not permit jihadi groups to fill that vacuum and threaten Israeli communities" in the occupied Golan Heights, an area in southwestern Syria that abuts Mount Hermon and which Israel captured and later annexed in 1981.



Teen Charged In Uk Dance Class Stabbings Pleads Not Guilty To Murder



A teen charged with killing three girls and wounding 10 other people in a stabbing rampage at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in England this summer remained silent in court as not guilty pleas were entered on his behalf.

Axel Rudakubana, 18, who has refused to speak in each court appearance, was read the charges of three counts of murder, 10 counts of attempted murder and additional charges related to possessing the poison ricin and for having an al-Qaida manual.

Justice Julian Goose ordered a clerk to enter the pleas in Liverpool Crown Court as Rudakubana stayed mum during a video appearance from a London prison where he is held.

It was the first time in a court appearance that the teen did not pull his sweatshirt collar over his nose to obscure his face.

He appeared to smile as an officer confirmed that the court proceeding could be heard at the prison. The judge noted that Rudakubana was not responding. He swayed from side to side as the charges were read and bent forward at one point.

Rudakubana was charged in August with murdering three girls - Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Bebe King, 6 - and stabbing 10 other people on July 29 in the seaside town of Southport in northern England.

The attack at a small dance and yoga studio on the first day of summer vacation sparked rioting across England and Northern Ireland fueled by far-right activists that lasted a week.

The violence, which injured more than 300 police officers and led to fiery attacks on hotels housing migrants, began after Rudakubana - then unnamed --was falsely identified as an asylum seeker who had recently arrived in Britain by boat.

Photos Speak



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State (c), Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt Hon Ben Kalu (L) and Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Barr. Festus Keyamo, SAN (R), during the ground-Breaking Ceremony of the Abia Airport Project at Nsulu in Isialangwa North LGA



L-R: Hon Nkiruka Onyejeocha, Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt Hon Ben Kalu, Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, SAN, Gov Alex Otti of Abia, Perm. Sec. Fed. Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Dr Emmanuel Meribole and Hon Amaobi Ogah, Member Repr. Isuikwuato/Umunneochi at House of Reprs, during the ground-Breaking Ceremony of the Abia Airport Project at Nsulu in Isialangwa North LGA Anambra



Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt Hon Ben Kalu (center) and other House of Reprs Members, during the ground-Breaking Ceremony of the Abia Airport Project at Nsulu in Isialangwa North LGA



A cross section of Traditional Rulers, during the ground-Breaking Ceremony of the Abia Airport Project at Nsulu in Isialangwa North LGA



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State (c), Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, SAN (12 L), Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt Hon Ben Kalu (11th L), Hon Nkiruka Onyejeocha, Minister of State for Labour and Employment (10th L), Hon Amaobi Ogah, Member Repr. Isuikwuato/Umunneochi at House of Reprs (10th R) and others, during the Minister of Aviation's visit to Gov Alex Otti in his Nvosi Village in Isiala Ngwa North LGA of Abia State.



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State performing the ground-Breaking Ceremony of the Abia Airport Project at Nsulu in Isialangwa North LGA while the Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt Hon Ben Kalu (1st R), Hon Nkiruka Onyejeocha, Minister of State for Labour and Employment (2nd L) and House of Rep. Member, Repr Isiala Ngwa North and South Fed. Constituency, Hon Ginger Onanusibe (1st L) watches, during the ground-breaking Ceremony of the Abia Airport Project at Nsulu in Isialangwa North LGA.



Speaker, Abia State House of Assembly, Rt Hon. Emmanuel Emeruwa and Chief B. B. Anyigo, APC Stakeholder, during the ground-breaking Ceremony of the Abia Airport Project at Nsulu in Isialangwa North LGA

FASHION IDEAS FOR FESTIVE SEASON

Fashion tips
with
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What to wear to a Christmas party or any event in the yuletide depends on the occasion, dress code, and your personal style. Here are some general guidelines to help you decide:

FORMAL EVENT:



FOR MEN:

- A pair of high heels or dressy sandals
- A suit and tie (black or navy suit with a festive tie)
- Statement jewelry and a clutch or small purse
- A dress shirt and dress pants with a blazer
- Black or brown shoes

FOR WOMEN:

- A cocktail dress or a formal gown



SEMI-FORMAL EVENT:



FOR MEN:

- Consider the party's theme, if any.
- Dress according to the venue. (e.g. office party, outdoor event etc).
- Don't be afraid to add some festive touches, like a fascinator or hat to your outfit.
- Be mindful of the dress code specified by the host, if any.
- Most importantly, wear what makes you feel confident and comfortable!

FOR WOMEN:

- A dressy skirt and top or a jumpsuit
- A pair of dressy shoes or sandals
- A classy Traditional dress or skirt and blouse
- A statement piece of jewelry and a small purse



CASUAL DRESS CODE:



FOR MEN:

- A festive sweater and jeans
- A casual button-down shirt and khakis
- Sneakers or loafers;

FOR WOMEN:

- A casual dress or a festive top and bottom
- A pair of flat shoes or pumps
- Minimal jewelry and a small purse

BUSINESS CASUAL DRESS CODE:

A long dress or a skirt and top combination is a great choice for a business casual Christmas party. Here are some tips to make your outfit festive and polished:

***Long Dress:**

1. Choose a festive color : Opt for a dress in a holiday-inspired color like red, green, or burgundy.
2. Add some sparkle: Add a statement piece of jewelry, like a sparkly necklace or earrings, to give your outfit some extra festivity.
3. Keep shoes simple: Pair your dress with a pair

of simple, yet dressy, sandals or heels.

***Skirt and Top:**

1. Mix and match textures: Pair a flowy skirt with a more structured top, or a smooth skirt with a textured top.
2. Choose a festive top: Opt for a floral top, preferably in Christmas colors.
3. Add some tights: Wear a pair of tights to add some extra warmth and texture to your outfit.
4. Keep shoes dressy: Pair your skirt and top with a pair of dressy sandals or pumps.



COMMON TIPS:

1. Keep the outfit balanced : Make sure your outfit is balanced and not too overwhelming. Avoid too many patterns or bright colors.
2. Add a pop of color: Add a pop of color with a fascinator, hat, or statement piece of jewelry.
3. Be mindful of the length: Make sure your dress or skirt is not too short or too long. Aim for a length that's just above the knee or midi-length.