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# NATIONAL Ambassador

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"Uplift the people, project the nation"

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## Appeal Court Slams FRSC with N10m Fine for Rights Violation of ABSU Lecturer

By Stephanie Adindu

In a landmark judgement that reinforces citizens' rights against abuse by law enforcement, the Court of Appeal sitting in Owerri has ordered the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) to pay N10 million in damages to Dr. Emmanuel Shebbs Ugochukwu, a lecturer at Abia State University (ABSU), for the unlawful seizure of his driver's license.

The unanimous decision was delivered by a three-man panel led by Justice Amina Audi Wambai, who affirmed that the FRSC's actions along Bende Road in Umuahia were illegal, abusive, and a clear violation of Dr. Ugochukwu's fundamental rights.

According to the court, the FRSC had no legal basis to confiscate the lecturer's license, especially after all his vehicle documentation and safety items had been verified to be in order. Dr. Ugochukwu recounted how one of the officers solicited a bribe during the encounter, which he declined, citing that he had no cash and needed to visit the ATM.

Following his refusal to pay, the officers allegedly fabricated new violations including a "worn-out tyre" and "no spare tyre" and proceeded to seize his driver's license, demanding a ₦3,000 fine.

Rather than bow to pressure or pull political strings, Dr. Ugochukwu chose to pursue justice in court. "I remembered the many Nigerians who don't have ID cards, connections, or cash to defend themselves," he said.

The High Court initially awarded him N30 million in damages. However, while the Appeal Court reduced the compensation to N10 million, it strongly upheld the illegality of the FRSC's conduct.

Civil rights groups have praised the judgement as a crucial precedent in the fight against abuse of power by law enforcement agencies.

Legal analysts said the ruling underscores the constitutional rights of Nigerian citizens to fair treatment and lawful process, even during routine security checks.

The FRSC is yet to issue an official response to the judgement.

Concluded



Women Advocate Group canvassing for the allocation of 182 reserved seats in the National Assembly and State Assemblies during the South-East Zonal Public Hearing on the review of the 1999 Constitution, held recently in Owerri, Imo State.

## South-East Leaders Push Divergent Constitutional Reforms

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru  
And Charles Ogbonnaya

**C**alls for structural justice, inclusive governance, and true federalism dominated discussions at the South-East Zonal Public Hearing on the Review of the 1999 Constitution, held at the Eze Imo Palace in Owerri, Imo State. Key regional leaders—Governor Hope Uzodinma of Imo, Governor Alex Otti of Abia, and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu—presented distinct yet intersecting visions for constitutional reform, each anchored in the region's historical concerns and Nigeria's evolving national reality.

Leading the charge for equity in state creation,

Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma, renewed the call for the establishment of at least two new states in the South-East to address what he termed "persistent and institutional marginalization" of the region.

"It has shrunk our voice and abridged our inclusivity," Uzodinma declared. "We deserve at

least two more states, including Anim State, which has the economic viability to become oil-producing and self-sustaining."

He stressed that the South-East remains the only geopolitical zone with five states, while other zones have six or more, resulting in underrepresentation in the National Assembly,

Federal appointments, and revenue sharing formulas.

In addition to state creation, Uzodinma advocated for the institutionalization of rotational presidency among Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, a state policing system, and a modernized definition of indigene status to include people born in or long-term residents of a community.

Continued on P.2

## Rights Advocate Urges 182 Reserved Seats for Women in NASS, State Assemblies

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

**T**he Southeast Zonal Coordinator of the Reserved Seat for Women Advocacy Campaign, Dr. Adaora Onyechere Sydney-Jack has called for the constitutional reservation

of 182 additional legislative seats for women at both national and state levels to achieve true gender balance and inclusive governance.

Speaking during the South-East Zonal Public Hearing on the Review of

the 1999 Constitution held in Owerri, Imo State, Dr. Sydney-Jack made a passionate appeal for structural reforms that would guarantee increased female representation in Nigeria's political space.

Continued on P.2

**EDITORIAL:**

**Governor Otti's Landmark Water and Sanitation Initiative**

## News

# South-East Leaders Push Divergent Constitutional Reforms

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"These reforms are not just political—they are moral imperatives that will promote equity, security, and national unity," he said, noting that while the 1999 Constitution need not be discarded entirely, it must be "continuously refined to match the aspirations of modern Nigeria."

Offering a cautionary perspective, Abia State Governor Dr. Alex Otti, represented by Deputy Governor Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu, urged restraint in the push for new states. He acknowledged the South-East's underrepresentation but warned that indiscriminate state creation could inflate government costs and deepen inefficiencies. "Creating more states may sound like a solution, but without independent revenue streams, it risks bloating our already strained bureaucracy," Otti said.

Instead, he proposed strengthening inclusive governance at the sub-national level, empowering all

communities through better resource distribution and participatory decision-making. He also strongly supported the establishment of state police, describing it as "a matter of national urgency," but emphasized the need for clear regulatory safeguards to prevent abuse. Otti threw his weight behind gender-inclusive reforms, calling for the creation of legislative seats for women—but warned against tokenism.

"Women must not be placeholders or political proxies. We need real integration through reformed internal party processes," he asserted.

The governor also supported constitutional backing for free and compulsory basic education, citing it as a cornerstone for long-term national development. He highlighted how previous constitutional reforms have enabled Abia's electricity independence, including the creation of the Abia State Electricity Regulatory Agency, as an example of the value of targeted,

practical reforms.

Declaring the event open, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives and Chairman of the Constitution Review Committee, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Okezie Kalu, called on Nigerians to take full ownership of the amendment process.

"This is your Constitution. You are not observers; you are co-authors of Nigeria's next constitutional chapter," Kalu told the gathering.

He urged stakeholders from Imo and Abia states to submit memoranda, raise critical questions, and remain engaged beyond the hearings. Kalu emphasized that constitutional reform is a process, not a one-time event.

"True reform requires sustained civic pressure. Only through active public involvement can we ensure these changes are implemented in both letter and spirit."

Kalu reaffirmed the National Assembly's commitment to reviewing over 80 proposed

amendments, including those addressing local government autonomy, electoral transparency, judicial independence, fiscal federalism, and gender equality.

He also praised President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration for fostering what he described as a "reform-friendly environment," enabling legislators to engage the nation in transformative conversations.

The Owerri public hearing, part of a nationwide consultation spearheaded by the 10th National Assembly, reflected the dynamic mix of hope, concern, and urgency surrounding Nigeria's constitutional future. While leaders like Uzodinma pushed for bold structural realignments, others like Otti emphasized pragmatism and institutional sustainability.

Yet in their differences, one message rang clear: the Constitution must evolve—through dialogue, participation, and shared vision—to reflect the realities, dreams, and diversity of all Nigerians.

Meanwhile, at the Southeast Zonal Public Hearing on Constitution Review held in Enugu, delegates from Anambra, Ebonyi, and Enugu States made a powerful case for structural reforms aimed at correcting longstanding imbalances in Nigeria's Federal System. The event, hosted by the House of Representatives' Constitution Review Committee (Centre A), was dominated by calls for the creation of an additional state in the Southeast and expansion of local government structures.

The loudest demand from participants was the urgent need for a sixth state in the region—currently the only geopolitical zone in the country with just five states. Stakeholders argued that the inequality has translated into limited political

representation and federal resources for the region.

Enugu State Governor, Dr. Peter Mbah, represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Prof. Chidiebere Onyia, urged the National Assembly to ensure the review exercise produces tangible outcomes rather than becoming a ceremonial process. "This should not end up as another talk show," Onyia emphasized, stressing that Nigerians are yearning for real constitutional change.

Beyond state creation, speakers from across the three states demanded the establishment of new Local Government Areas (LGAs) in line with population growth and rising administrative demands. Many decried the practice of appointing caretaker committees to manage LGAs, calling instead for full democratic governance at the grassroots.

Participants also presented several high-impact reform proposals, including:

Full institutionalization of local government administration;

Judicial reforms to accommodate Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms;

Integration of the national voter register with the National Identity Management System (NIMC) to improve electoral integrity;

Creation of reserved seats for women in legislative bodies;

A comprehensive review of the revenue allocation formula to promote fairness among states and regions.

The public hearing drew wide participation from civil society groups, traditional rulers, political leaders, and community-based organizations, all rallying for an inclusive and truly federal Nigeria.

As the Constitution Review Committee continues its nationwide consultations, the expectations from the Southeast are clear: equity, inclusion, and a structure that reflects the realities of modern governance.

Proposed states under consideration for creation in Nigeria's South-East geopolitical zone include Aba State, Orashi State, Orlu State, Anioma State, Etiti State, Adada State, and Anim State, among others.

### Reconciliation of Name/ Date of Birth

This is to affirm that Robert Charity which appeared in my Account/BVN and Robert Charity Ifeyinwa as rightly captured on my NIN are same person. My Date of Birth was wrongly captured as 19/03/1984 instead of 19/03/82. I now wish to be known and addressed as ROBERT CHARITY IFEYINWA. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note.  
**ROBERT CHARITY IFEYINWA**

## Rights Advocate Urges 182 Reserved Seats for Women in NASS, State Assemblies

Continued from P.1

"When women lead, the nation thrives. Give our daughters a voice," she declared, stressing that empowering women in political leadership is not just a moral imperative, but a strategic move toward national development and equity.

She proposed the allocation of: 111 additional seats for women in the House of Representatives, 37 seats in the Senate (one per state and FCT), and three seats per State Assembly, totaling 182 reserved seats across the National and State legislatures.

She emphasized that the current level of female representation in Nigeria's governance structure is alarmingly low and does not reflect the significant contributions of women to the nation's social and economic fabric.

"This is not about tokenism; it is about fairness, equity, and the future of our democracy. Women constitute almost half of the population but are grossly underrepresented in political leadership. That must change," she asserted.

She further argued that without intentional legal reforms, women will continue to be sidelined in Nigeria's male-dominated political

landscape. She urged the Constitution Review Committee to adopt the proposal, noting that countries that have implemented similar measures have seen positive transformations in governance outcomes.

Her remarks were met with applause from stakeholders and advocacy groups present at the public hearing, underscoring growing support for gender-inclusive reforms in Nigeria's evolving constitutional landscape.

The South-East Zonal Public Hearing is part of a nationwide constitutional review process being conducted by the 10th National Assembly, aimed at addressing critical issues such as gender equity, state policing, electoral reform, and local government autonomy.

Contributing, the former Abia State lawmaker and gender advocate, Hon. Blessing Nwagba, has raised alarm over the persistent underrepresentation of women in State Houses of Assembly across the Southeast region of Nigeria.

Citing recent data from the 2023 general elections, Nwagba expressed deep concern over the absence or near-absence of female legislators in most southeastern states, describing

it as a setback for gender equity and inclusive governance.

According to the figures, out of a total of 129 seats across the five southeastern state assemblies, only seven to ten are occupied by women — a representation of just about 7–8%.

Hon. Nwagba emphasized that Abia and Imo States have no female lawmakers at all, while Anambra and Ebonyi have just one each. Enugu performs slightly better, with up to four women in its 24-member assembly.

Nwagba further described the situation as "deeply troubling" and a major obstacle to women's political advancement in the region.

"Women are largely missing from the table where key decisions are made in our states. This lack of representation not only stifles women's voices but also undermines the development agenda," she stated.

Nwagba called on political parties, civil society, and state governments to implement affirmative policies that will encourage and support women's participation in politics.

She further warned that without deliberate efforts to address structural barriers, the Southeast will continue to lag in



## News

### OYC National President, Charges Newly Elected Abia Executive

By Okereke Kate

**T**he National President of the Ohanaeze Youth Council (OYC), Comr Igboayaka O. Igboayaka, has called on the newly elected leaders of OYC in Abia State, to prioritize the building of the South-East region in their administration.

The South East which has suffered some pockets of under-development, would be receiving massive attention through the contribution of the Ohanaeze Youth Council.

Speaking at the OYC convention in Umuahia, the National President, Comr Igboayaka, in his charge to the newly elected officers who would pilot the affairs of organization in Abia for the next four years, said it was time to recover "Ala Igbo", therefore, the executive should strive to get back the region.

He said they should mobilize more youths into the fold and as well, revamp the educational system in the South East by building more schools for the education of children.

Igboayaka assured that he would be ready to provide the necessary support to the newly executive to succeed, while urging them to be committed to serve, as their emergence is a significant opportunity to recover and rebuild "Ala Igbo".

In his speech, the newly elected Chairman of OYC Abia State, Comrade Eugene Okonta, expressed gratitude to the youth of Abia for the trust and mandate bestowed upon him. He pledged to lead with dedication and implement strategic measures that would reposition the Council as a unifying force for Igbo youths across the state.

Okonta disclosed he was aware of the responsibilities that come with the new position and assured that he would give his best for the collective good of the Igbo youth and the entire Igbo nation.

The new Abia OYC chairman, further outlined his administration's plan to activate the statutory structures of the OYC across the state, from the state to local government, ward, and community levels, emphasizing that the grassroots approach would encourage broader youth participation and foster unity.

He also stressed the importance of engaging stakeholders, governments, security agencies, private organizations, NGOs, and religious bodies, to combat crime and reduce social vices among Igbo youths.

Comrade Okonta called on federal and state lawmakers to advocate for youth-friendly legislation and empowerment programmes that would support the aspirations of young people across Igbo land.

He echoed the theme of the convention, "Mobilizing Igbo Youths in Abia for Social Reengineering as a Means to Restore Peace," stressing its relevance in the current socio-economic climate.

Meanwhile, the OYC Chairman made a passionate appeal to Igbo youths to shun crime and drug abuse, reminding them that the challenges of the economy should not lead them to criminality.

"As we journey toward the Igbo nation of our dream, let us remain resolute, committed, and hopeful. The promised land is near," he added.

The convention ended with renewed optimism for a better future for Igbo youths under the leadership of Comrade Eugene Okonta and his executive team.



Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti OFR

### Abia Govt Reaffirms Ban on Illegal Revenue Collection

By Charles Ogbonnaya

**A**bia State Deputy Governor, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu, has restated the government's firm position against illegal collection of levies by individuals impersonating government officials, particularly in Ohafia Local Government Area.

Engr. Emetu expressed concern over a recent incident in which two individuals were allegedly assaulted by the youth in Ebem Ohafia, in response to such illegal activities.

He condemned the practice, warning all those involved to desist immediately, and emphasized that the state government has not authorized any person or group person to collect fees or levies on its behalf without proper documentation and official approval from the Abia State Board of Internal Revenue.

"These unauthorized collectors not only break the law, but also damage the trust between the

government and its people," he said.

The deputy governor directed the State Taskforce Team in the Ohafia Zone to intensify efforts in stopping these illegal practices and to reinforce the government's commitment to transparency, accountability, and public service.

He urged residents of Ohafia and other local government areas in the state to remain alert and

report any suspicious activities to the authorities.

Engr. Emetu reassured the public that the government is fully committed to ensuring all financial transactions are carried out legally and transparently, and warned that any form of extortion or illegal fee collection will not be tolerated.

"The Abia State Government is dedicated to the welfare of its people and will take all necessary steps to protect them from exploitation," he added.

### Bayelsa Wants 25 New LGAs, State Police, Oil Revenue Control

By Ekebuisi Precious

**B**ayelsa State has asked the federal government to approve 25 new local government areas (LGAs) to ease the burden on its current eight LGAs. Some of these existing LGAs serve more than 150 communities, making it hard to deliver services fairly. The request was made by the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Mr. Biriya Dambo, at a public hearing on constitutional review held in Yenagoa.

The state also wants

more control over its natural resources. Bayelsa is calling for a system where states manage their oil and gas resources directly. Under this proposal, states would keep 60% of the revenue and send 40% to the federal government as tax. Officials said this would help address long-standing unfairness in resource sharing.

Bayelsa is also pushing for the creation of state police. This would allow them to better handle security and fight crime. The state believes this step is important for true federalism and improved safety across the country.

Other demands include more autonomy for local governments, reforms in elections and the judiciary, and a review of power-sharing between the federal and state governments. Governor Douye Diri said the changes are needed to correct "historical injustices" and to make the constitution more fair and relevant to Nigerians today.

Leaders from Delta and Edo states also supported the call for constitutional changes. They said the current 1999 Constitution has many problems and needs major updates.

The hearing was organized by the House of Representatives' Committee on Constitution Review for the South-South region. The committee chairman, Prof. Julius Ihonvbere, promised that all proposals would be reviewed and submitted to the full committee for action.

Many important figures attended the event, including traditional rulers, state lawmakers, federal legislators, and representatives from Delta and Edo states. It was seen as a major step in Bayelsa's campaign for a stronger voice in Nigeria's federal system.

## News

### CJ Pardons Female Maniac, 122 Inmates In Akwa Ibom, Calls For Hygiene of Facilities

By LovinaEmole

The Chief Judge (CJ) of Akwa Ibom State, Justice EkaeteObot, has freed an 18 year old mentally challenged inmate and 122 others during her 2nd quarter, 2025 tour of the Medium Security Custodial Centres (MSCCs) in Ikot Abasi, Eket, Ikot Ekpene, and Uyo.

The Chief Judge also called on officers at the Correctional facilities to ensure that hygiene is maintained to reduce the spread of communicable diseases.

Justice Obot emphasized the significance of jail delivery in safeguarding justice and fundamental human rights stressing, "This exercise aligns with the constitutional mandate of the judiciary to ensure that no person is unjustly detained without due process."

From the 123 released inmates, four were from Ikot Abasi custodial centre; 17 from Eketcentre, 29 in Ikot Ekpenecentre, while 73 were set free in Uyo custodial centre marking the end of the CJ's three day visit.

Also 62 out of the 123 inmates were released on health grounds which involves basically, Anaemia, Scabies and tuberculosis.

She instructed that the dormitory which all the sick inmates were camped should be properly sanitized and nobody should be put there for the meantime to avoid further spread of diseases.

The chief judge observed that most of the offenders had minor offences and had overstayed in the custodial centres beyond the period they were supposed to stay, if they had been convicted.

She, therefore released some on compassionate, health grounds, trump up charges, missing case files and lack of diligence prosecution.

The mentally challenged girl who was reported to have been eating foam or any other non edible objects at sight was released and was directed to be taken to psychiatrists hospital in Eket for proper examination and treatment.

Also one EtienoOkon, who was 15 years when he was detained had been in custody for five years, without trial for custial charge was released alongside his father.

The CJ, while discharging the inmates in all the centres, charged them to be of good behaviour and shun all acts that might bring them back to the custodial centre.

Obot expressed displeasure on the number of inmates awaiting trials, some without any charge preferred against them still in custody, with some staying more than the sentence of their crime if convicted.

She charged prosecutors on the need to ensure that no one was denied justice and they should not infringe on the fundamental rights of the accused.

The chief judge commended all the Judges, Magistrates, Court officials and Controller of Correctional Centre, Akwa Ibom Command for their commitment and steadfastness throughout the three days exercise.

She prayed God Almighty to grant the sick ones released speedy recovery and sustained those still in incarceration.

She, however gave a sum of Three Hundred Thousand Naira to the centre to assist in the transportation of the freed inmates back to their various destinations.

In his remarks, the Controller of Correctional Centre, Akwa Ibom Command, Mr Frank Okonkwo, thanked the chief judge for her visit to the facilities and the goodwill extended to the custodial centres in the state.

Okonkwo highlighted some of the challenges confronting the centres to include dilapidated facilities and lack of logistics to convey inmates to court on time. He appealed to the Chief Judge to facilitate the approval of pending requests to the Executive Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Pastor Umo Eno, for the provision of operational vehicles, repair of existing ones, and supply of beddings – especially critical during the current cold season.

## Abia Assembly Moves to Curb Insecurity, Approves Market Upgrade, Budget Supplement

By Chijioke Chukwuemeka

The Abia State House of Assembly under the leadership of the Speaker, Rt Hon Emmanuel Ihuoma Emeruwa moves to address a series of legislative matters with a focus on community security, infrastructure development, and regulatory reforms.

Emeruwa made this known following a matter of urgent public importance, raised by the Majority Leader of the 8th Assembly and member representing Arochukuwu State Constituency, Hon. Okoro Uchenna Kalu, which condemned the recent invasion of Atan Abam in Arochukuwu LGA by suspected persons from Ikot Esse in Akwa Ibom State.

The attack according to the lawmaker reportedly led to injuries and several missing persons while ruling, the Speaker

referred the matter to the House Committee on Boundary and Security and urged swift intervention to prevent further conflict and protect affected residents.

In another development, member representing Ikwuano State Constituency, Hon. Isienyi Boniface commended Governor Otti for approving the reconstruction of Abia Nde Oru market in Ikwuano. The N2 billion project is expected to stimulate economic activity in the area.

Hon. Isienyi further presented a notice of motion (H.A.M 41), proposing collaboration with Akwa Ibom State to establish a trailer park along the disputed Ariam-Usaka and IniNakari boundary, aimed at reducing tensions and promoting peace.

Meanwhile, the House also visited other legislative items which includes H.A.M 39: A motion seeking regulation of

orphanages to curb child trafficking.

H.A.M 40: A motion calling for a ban on the establishment of filling stations in residential and market areas. The Speaker advised the Sponsor, Hon. Lewis Chinemerem Obianyi, to elevate it to a full bill for broader legislative consideration.

Supplementary Budget Bill Advances the Abia State 2025 Supplementary Appropriation Bill (H.A.B 33), sponsored by the Majority Leader, Hon. Okoro Uchenna Kalu, passed both first and second readings. It was subsequently referred to the House Committees on Budget & Planning and Appropriation.

The bill was enacted following a letter from the Governor, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti requested the Assembly to consider a Supplementary Appropriation Bill for the 2025 Budget. The Speaker, then referred the bill to

relevant Committees, signaling the House readiness to support the governor's developmental agenda.

Another bill advanced was the Abia State Polluter Pays and Extended Producer Responsibility Bill, 2025 (H.A.B 31), which has scaled the second reading. The Speaker, however, directed that a public hearing be conducted by the Committees on Health, Trade and Commerce, and Environment to ensure stakeholder engagement.

Consideration of the Abia State Start-Up Bill, 2025 (H.A.B 32), as well as Committee reports on erosion control and a public petition, were deferred to a later date.

The Speaker adjourned plenary to Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., assuring members that all pending matters would be duly addressed in subsequent sittings.

## NUJ Moves To Crackdown on Quack Journalists, Urges Reforms in Abia Civil Service

By Amarachi Uzonkwu

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Abia State Council, has reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating quackery and impersonation in journalism, warning that individuals practicing without proper accreditation will face legal consequences in line with the Nigeria Press Council law.

This was contained in a nine-point communiqué issued at the end of the Union's monthly congress held at the NUJ Press Centre, Umuahia. The document was signed by the Council Chairman, Comrade Chidi Asonye, and Secretary, Comrade lyke Onuegbu.

"In line with the directive from the National Secretariat, Congress resolves to fight quackery and impersonation of journalists by non-professionals," the communiqué stated. "Henceforth, anyone not licensed to practice as a journalist, especially bloggers posing as journalists, will be prosecuted if arrested."

The Union called on Governor Alex Otti to urgently conclude the long-suspended promotion exercise for civil servants, many of whom, it noted, have not been promoted in over six years.

It also urged the Governor to exercise strict oversight of the Ministry of Finance, MDAs, and the Office of the Accountant-General. The NUJ expressed concern over reports of irregular salary payments, underpayments, unexplained stoppages, and heavy deductions from workers' salaries.

The Union stressed that implementing new salary scales would serve as a morale booster for civil servants and drive greater productivity in the public sector.



Abia State NUJ Chairman, Comrade Chidi Asonye

While commending Governor Otti's sustained investment in road infrastructure, the NUJ urged contractors handling the reconstruction of Akanu Ibiam and Library Avenue roads to properly open up the drainage systems to prevent flooding in nearby residential and commercial areas.

On the Umuahia-Uzuakoli road, the Union called for the construction of a roundabout and installation of speed breakers at the Signboard Junction axis to reduce the frequency of road accidents. It also advised tricycle operators and other motorists to adhere to speed limits on newly constructed roads.

The NUJ appealed to the

Abia State Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA) and residents to ensure regular clearing of drainages to prevent flooding during the rainy season.

The Congress also raised alarm over alleged misconduct by some Internal Revenue Service officials in Umuahia, who were reportedly collecting cash payments from revenue defaulters without issuing receipts.

"The public is reminded that cash payments to government officials have been prohibited by the Alex Otti administration as part of measures to block revenue leakages," the communiqué noted.

The Union lauded the Governor's plan to build a world-class Medical City at Mbasaa in

Isialangwa South LGA and lauded the recent completion of the access road through Umuocheala, a host community to the proposed site.

It also commended the launch of the Integrated WASH Accelerated Programme (IWAP), a solar-powered water and sanitation initiative aimed at improving hygiene standards across the state. The NUJ recommended the deployment of qualified personnel to manage the facilities and prevent vandalism or misuse.

The Council concluded by pledging continued collaboration with the state government in promoting professional journalism, good governance, and sustainable development across Abia State.



# Editorial

## Governor Otti's Landmark Water and Sanitation Initiative

**O**n July 16, 2025, Abia State reached another significant milestone with the launch of the Abia Integrated Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene Accelerated Programme (AIWAP). This initiative began with the commissioning of a pilot project at Okigwe Park in Umuahia and the flag-off of the Aba Regional Water Scheme at St. Joseph's College, Aba.

Governor Alex Otti's administration deserves commendation for this renewed commitment to providing safe drinking water and sanitation, critical pillars for public health and a higher quality of life. Access to clean water is not just a basic need but a key indicator in the Human Development Index (HDI).

During the launch, Governor Otti emphasized the program's broader impact, noting:

> "This initiative, in addition to guaranteeing steady and sufficient water supply, will also support human hygiene and effective sanitation."

He further stated:

> "Beyond water supply, our goal includes health-care and human support interventions that will improve community well-being, boost economic productivity, and energize our drive toward mass prosperity."

Unfortunately, past administrations largely neglected this essential sector,

leaving Abia among Nigeria's lowest-ranked states in water and sanitation services. The last meaningful effort dates back several decades to the era of Chief Sam Mbakwe (1979-1983) in the old Imo State.

Governor Otti's ambitious water agenda seeks to reverse this decline. He has pledged to restore public water supply in Aba, Umuahia, and across the state's 57 rural water schemes. The Aba Regional Water Scheme will also enhance emergency response efforts, particularly during fire outbreaks, by ensuring water availability for rescue operations.

The significance of water as a vital resource cannot be overstated. Given its prolonged neglect in the state, this initiative stands out as both timely and necessary. The governor's proactive approach has rightly earned him widespread praise.

However, the long-term success of these projects will depend on community participation and ownership. While the Governor has directed the deployment of security personnel to safeguard the infrastructure, local residents and beneficiary communities must also take responsibility for their proper use and protection.

This article only scratches the surface of what's possible when leadership meets vision. It is also a call to explore sustainable strategies that ensure these facilities endure and serve the public effectively.

In all, kudos to Governor Alex Otti and his team for not only making promises but also backing them with meaningful action – prioritizing projects that truly benefit the people.

LETTERS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:  
**THE EDITOR**  
**NATIONAL AMBASSADOR**  
**P.M.B 7245, UMUAHIA**  
E-mail:nationalambassador@gmail.com

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### Urgent Need to Fix Nzeadibe Close, Off Kenville Junction, Olokoro Road

Dear Editor,

I am using your widely read newspaper to call on the Governor of Abia State, His Excellency Dr. Alex Otti, to please help fix Nzeadibe Close. This road is located off Kenville Junction, along Olokoro Road in Umuahia.

Nzeadibe Close used to be a good road, but today it is in a very bad condition. The road is full of potholes, and during the rainy season, it becomes muddy and flooded. Cars and motorcycles can hardly pass, and people find it difficult to walk through. Sometimes, residents have to take longer routes, which makes transportation more expensive and stressful.

This road is important to many people. It serves families, businesses, and others who use it every day. Sadly, it has been neglected for many years. There is no proper drainage, and no maintenance has been done to keep the road in good shape. This has made life difficult for those who live and work in the area.

We are aware that Governor Otti has done great work in fixing many roads across the state. We truly appreciate those efforts. That is why we are asking him to please remember Nzeadibe Close too. The people in this area are hopeful that their road will also be repaired, just like many others have been.

Fixing this road will make life easier for everyone who uses it. It will help businesses grow, increase the value of properties in the area, and show that the government cares about all communities, not just the big ones.

We kindly ask for quick action. The people of Nzeadibe Close olokoro are waiting and hoping for help from our wonderful governor Dr Alex Otti.

Sincerely,  
**Favour Okorie**

## Focus

# Celebrating Vodi: From Tape Measure To National Icon

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

**W**hen the doors of the Main Hall at the International Conference Centre, Abuja opened for Seyi Vodi's 50th birthday dinner, it was no ordinary celebration — it was a statement. One of Nigeria's most iconic fashion entrepreneurs, whose journey began with a tape measure and raw ambition, was being honoured by the elite of Nigeria's political, economic, and cultural spheres. And the turnout was breathtaking.

A former president of a foreign nation flew in. Nigeria's Vice President was officially represented. The Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives was present. Four serving ministers, the Chairman of the EFCC, captains of industry from oil, banking, tech, and media sectors, and even royalty — led by the regal presence of the Ooni of Ife — all gathered to pay tribute to a man affectionately known as "the tailor of the powerful."

More than 5,000 people filled the expansive hall, straining the venue's capacity and underscoring a singular truth: this was more than a birthday party. It was a national acknowledgment of a local icon.

The Rise of Seyi Vodi: Tailor, Tycoon, Trailblazer

Seyi Vodi, born Oluwaseyi Adekunle, may have made his name in fashion, but his story is more than thread and fabric. It's a narrative of resilience, vision, and faith.

Years ago, he arrived in Abuja as a youth corper, with no money, no family name, and no connections — just a measuring tape and a hunger to succeed. He squatted in friends' homes, took small tailoring gigs, and slowly built his brand — one stitch, one client, one



Billionaire Tailor, Mr. Seyi Vodi, OON

recommendation at a time. It wasn't luck that propelled him to the top — it was a rare mix of unwavering grit, tireless marketing, strategic thinking, and an unshakeable devotion to God.

In 2024, he unveiled his brand-new corporate headquarters — an imposing architectural statement in the heart of Abuja, rivaling any multinational edifice in both scale and design. Yet, despite this towering success, Seyi remains at the front lines of his business — still marketing, still meeting clients, still delivering excellence.

A Birthday That Became a Business Summit

At the 50th birthday dinner, the atmosphere was equal parts luxury and legacy. It wasn't just the glamour of Abuja's elite or the elegance of the event that stood out — it was the respect and admiration that dignitaries and business leaders alike had for Seyi's journey.

As guests queued to greet him — some with heartfelt words, others with stories of how he inspired them — it became clear: Vodi is more than a tailor. He's a symbol. A brand. A movement.

He represents what's possible when local craftsmanship meets global ambition. He is,

without doubt, a poster child for the "Made in Nigeria" dream — an indigenous entrepreneur who has defied odds to dominate his industry, not just with style but with substance.

Championing Nigeria's Fashion Future

The Vodi celebration also threw a spotlight on Nigeria's flourishing fashion ecosystem. The event served as a reminder that Seyi is not the only one blazing a trail. Names like Prince Arthur Uche of Beyond Clothing Nigeria, Fadamasi Concepts, TOSKyme House of Fashion, T David Tochukwu, Chibueze Richard Ikwechegh (Ri-Kwech), Donchizy, Kloth Planet, and Reverend Dior (@nefpatra) were also praised as rising stars within the industry.

It's a thriving network of entrepreneurs who, like Vodi, are transforming local fashion into a global export — one customer, one design, one innovation at a time.

Faith, Hustle, and the Future

In a country where opportunities are often scarce and the system can seem designed to frustrate rather than facilitate, Seyi Vodi stands as proof that faith, hard work, strategic thinking, and humility still matter. He has not just built a business — he has inspired a generation.

As the night wore on and tributes flowed, one thing was clear: Seyi Vodi's story is still being written. At 50, he's only just begun.

And as one quiet guest at the back of the hall observed with satisfaction, "Tis yet morning."

To the man who made the impossible look effortless: Happy 50th Birthday, Seyi Vodi. May your thread never break, and your fabric continue to inspire.

## Feature

# Prioritising Training For An Efficient Abia Workforce

By Eagle Okoro

**I**t was Tom Flick, a famous American footballer-turned leadership expert and motivational speaker, who once said, "In a world of constant change, the spoils go to the nimble and adaptable — those who can learn and unlearn with equal ease."

It is against this backdrop that personnel training and retraining in every workplace, private or public, have become critically important, considering the central role they play in human capital development and increased productivity.

Little wonder, the Abia State Governor, Dr Chioma Alex Otti, spared no efforts in approving the nomination of three senior Abia civil servants and one political appointee for a three-week seminar overseas in pursuit of his lofty ambition to upscale and strengthen the state civil service to meet the demand of today's ever dynamic world.

The list of the lucky nominees includes the Special Assistant to the Governor on Science, Technology & Innovation, Ms. Chibuzor Elizabeth Chijioke, the Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Mrs Justina Eboh, Mrs Nnedinma Nwadinobi of the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy, and Mr Ogwo Chimaoge of the Bureau of Training, Office of the Head of Service.

They are due to fly out of the shores of Nigeria on July 17 and would be away to Hubei, Jiangsu, and Henan Provinces, in the

People's Republic of China. During their stay, the quartet are expected to scale up their knowledge in digital technology for a more resilient and efficient performance capable of positively transforming the state civil service.

It is being organised and sponsored by the Wuhan Research Institute of Posts and Telecommunications (FiberHome Technology Group), through the Office of the Consul-General. It hopes to cover critical digital and technical topics,

such as Cloud Data Center Design and Security, Application of AI and 5G in Data Networks, Smart City Infrastructure and International Exchange on Digital Transformation Practices.

The Abia Government's approval for the training further demonstrates Gov. Otti's firm commitment to promoting strategic global exposure and technical excellence among Abia public and civil servants, in consonance with his administration's core vision of building an efficient Abia

workforce, adequately equipped to embrace a technologically competitive world.

It is significantly gratifying that under Gov. Otti's transformational and revolutionary leadership, Abia has

**🎯 The training is a comprehensively all-expense-paid seminar on Cloud Data Center Planning and Construction 🎯**

continued to soar steadily and progressively, being exponentially repositioned into a hub of technological innovation and beacon of prosperity, driven by transparency, with a solid and enduring infrastructural base.

Moreso, it is evident that the current developmental stride by the visionary governor has continued to invoke and elicit renewed national and international confidence and interest in God's Own State, thus not only making such trainings and mutually-rewarding bilateral relationships and opportunities possible but increasingly regular.

It is a thing of joy that these four nominees were considered worthy for the impending trip. And as the Abia State ambassadors to the international seminar, it is imperative

that their consciousness is sufficiently aroused to the fact that the China trip should not be deemed a jamboree. It is a serious intellectual endeavour, which provides them the unique opportunity to upgrade themselves, digitally and intellectually, so as to be able to contribute their quota toward the onerous task of rebuilding Abia, in sync with the focus and objective of the Otti's administration.

They are expected to represent the state in China with dignity and distinction, engage fully with the programme, and at the end prepare a brief national presentation on Nigerias, Abia's data infrastructure efforts, as well as contribute to post-engagement reporting and knowledge sharing.

It is important they realise that Gov. Otti's government, which places immense value and premium on personnel training, has by this gesture made a huge investment in them and there is always an expectation, rightly of course, for a return on every good investment.

Therefore, the ultimate outcome and reward that Abians anxiously await to get at the end of the two-week seminar in far away China is a more robust, vibrant, efficient, resilient, eminently productive and visibly transformed Abia civil service that properly aligns with the 21st Century digitally-propelled global village. To God be the glory!



**ABIA STATE GOVERNMENT**  
**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**  
2 Library Avenue Umuahia, Abia State

**INVITATION TO TENDER**  
**PUBLIC PROCUREMENT FOR AGRICULTURAL INPUTS (2025 SEASON)**

The Abia State Ministry of Agriculture, as part of its ongoing efforts to provide improved farm inputs to support our verified farmers to boost production, enhance crop yields and generally fight hunger and food insecurity, invites tenders from interested and reputable contractors for the execution of the following agricultural interventions:

Lot 1: Procurement and Distribution of Agricultural Inputs

**SCOPE OF WORK:**

A) Supply of:

- i) improved seeds/seedlings
- ii) organic / inorganic fertilizers
- iii) Herbicides and crop protection materials

B) Training and logistics for input delivery.

Lot 2: Provision of Agricultural Extension Services

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Interested contractors must submit the following:

1. Evidence of registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).
2. Valid Tax Clearance Certificate (last 3 years)
3. Company profile with list of similar jobs executed.
4. Evidence of financial capacity (e.g., bank reference or statement).
5. Proof of technical capability (equipment/staff).
6. Any other relevant documents as may be requested.
7. Evidence of payment of Tenders fee.

**SUBMISSION DETAILS:**

All submissions should be in sealed envelopes clearly marked:

"Tender for Lot (Specify Lot Number) – Ministry of

Agriculture"

and addressed to:

Head, Planning, Research and Statistics  
Ministry of Agriculture  
Umuahia, Abia State.

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION:** August 5th 2025.

Only shortlisted vendors will be invited for further evaluation and procurement procedures.

**FEES:**

- A) N100,000 for jobs N200million and below;
- B) N250,000 for jobs N500million and below, and,
- C) N500,000 for jobs up to N1billion

Payment of Tender fees is to be made to:

Abia State Consolidated IGR Account

Bank = Access Bank

Account Nos = 1794253977

Narration = Ministry of Agriculture Tender

**PLEASE NOTE:**

The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any bid.

Late submissions will not be considered.

Procurement is subject to the approval of the Ministerial Tenders Board.

**SIGNED:**

**Dr. Onu Nwokedi**

For: Permanent Secretary,

Ministry of Agriculture,

Abia State.

+2348036765777

ijeoma.aguwa@abiastate.gov.ng





## Abuja Digest

with Sophina Ovuike  
+2348037744514

### FG Trains FCT Health Managers on Data-Driven Planning

The Federal Government has concluded a four-day intensive training programme for health leaders and managers in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), aimed at equipping them with tools to develop smart, budget-linked, and data-driven Annual Operational Plans (AOPs) for the 2026 fiscal year.

Organised under the National Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative (NHSRII), the training was facilitated by the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare through the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) Coordinating Office. It is part of a broader strategy to align FCT health plans with national priorities and ensure efficient resource utilisation.

Speaking during the closing ceremony, Dr. Adedolapo Fasawe, Mandate Secretary of the FCT Health Services and Environment Secretariat (FCT HSES), described the training as a milestone toward a responsive and accountable health planning process. According to her, the smart AOPs will align with the FCT budget and facilitate access to funds through the Disbursement-Linked Indicators (DLIs).

> "This is a bold step towards building a health system that reflects the true needs of the people. Our goal is to develop budget-linked AOPs that government and partners can rally around," Fasawe said.

More than 70 senior health officials, programme managers, and planning officers from FCT agencies, area councils, and development partners participated in the training. The sessions focused on: Leadership and governance in health systems, Evidence-based budgeting and results-driven planning, Multi-stakeholder coordination and accountability mechanisms, Use of web-based tools for AOP development,

Data literacy for decision-making and performance monitoring.

Dr. Teresa Nwachukwu, Acting Director of Health Planning, Research and Statistics at FCT HSES and FCT SWAp Desk Officer, noted that the programme aimed to bridge planning capacity gaps and align all stakeholder actions with the FCT Health Sector Strategic Blueprint (HSSB).

> "The training is part of a deliberate effort to ensure that the 2026 AOP reflects flagship initiatives like the HOPE Health Agenda, HSSB, and the Maternal and Neonatal Mortality Reduction Innovation Initiative (MAMII)," she stated.

Participants identified critical health financing gaps across the FCT, especially in the area councils, citing inadequate budgetary provisions for key health programmes and monitoring activities. They urged development partners to harmonize their interventions with government-led strategies to avoid duplication and ensure impactful results.

Key recommendations from the training included: Increased domestic and donor funding to support health systems, Establishment of dedicated budget lines for monitoring and evaluation, Strengthened health financing structures at the area council level, Fulfillment of the 15% health budget allocation target in line with the Abuja Declaration of 2001.

The workshop reaffirmed the Tinubu administration's commitment to improving health service delivery under the Renewed Hope Health Agenda, with coordinated planning and transparent budgeting forming the backbone of ongoing reforms.

## FG Prosecute 730 Terrorism Financiers

**N**igeria has successfully prosecuted over 730 terrorism-related cases as part of its intensified efforts to disrupt terrorist financing, according to Major General Adamu Laka, National Coordinator of the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC).

Speaking recently at a Financial Action Task Force (FATF) simulation exercise in Abuja, Laka disclosed that more than 90 of these cases received direct support from the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU). He praised the NFIU's collaboration with other security

agencies, which he said has significantly disrupted the financial networks of terrorist organizations. "Disrupting the financial lifelines of terrorist organizations is central to our national counterterrorism strategy," Laka stated. "We are committed to this cause and value our partnerships with both local and international stakeholders, including the U.S. Department of Treasury."

He highlighted the crucial role played by the Joint Standard Investigation Committee on Terrorism Financing and reaffirmed the

Federal Government's determination to combat illicit financial flows that threaten national and regional stability.

The FATF meeting and simulation exercise were designed to assess Nigeria's preparedness for its upcoming FATF evaluation and to strengthen inter-agency coordination in tackling money laundering and terrorism financing. "This is not just a routine exercise," Laka noted. "It is a critical simulation to test the robustness of our institutional response and harmonize strategies ahead of the FATF assessment."

Hajiya Hafsat Bakari, CEO of the NFIU, echoed this sentiment, commending the country's progress in fulfilling the 19-point FATF action plan. She revealed that Nigeria will host 11 FATF reviewers, covering all key compliance areas—a sign of growing international confidence in Nigeria's financial oversight framework.

Bakari also announced that Nigeria has been invited to join the FATF as a guest member, allowing the country to participate in global discussions under its own flag. "This recognition reflects the excellent work we've done and marks a significant step toward full membership," she said. "The eyes of the global FATF network are on Nigeria, and we are prepared to meet the challenge."

## NDDC Audit Report: SERAP, Citizens Sue FG, Call For Transparency

**P**ressure is mounting on the Federal Government as the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) and four concerned Nigerians have dragged President Bola Tinubu's administration before the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice over its refusal to release the forensic audit report on the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

The suit, filed last Friday and marked ECW/CCJ/APP/35/25, seeks to compel the Nigerian government to

make the report public, citing violations of transparency and the citizens' right to access information. The plaintiffs include Prince Taiwo Aiyedatiwa, Chief Jude Igboigifurotogu Pulemote, Ben Omietimi Tariye, and Princess Elizabeth Egbe.

SERAP's Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare, in a statement on Sunday, disclosed that the audit—commissioned by former President Muhammadu Buhari in 2019—allegedly exposed the mismanagement and disappearance of N6 trillion from the NDDC between 2001 and 2019, implicating top political

figures and government officials.

The plaintiffs argue that by withholding the report, the Nigerian government is breaching its obligations under international human rights law, including the right to freedom of expression and access to information.

"The government has not provided any legal justification for its refusal to release the report," the plaintiffs said. "Its continued secrecy promotes impunity, suppresses the truth, and erodes public trust."

The case also references recent claims by FCT Minister Nyesom

Wike, who alleged that the wife of a former minister received N48 billion over 12 months to purportedly train women in the Niger Delta—an example of the kind of questionable transactions that prompted the audit.

Through the court, the plaintiffs are seeking an order directing the government to publish the audit findings and take concrete steps to close longstanding transparency and accountability gaps in the operations of the NDDC.

"The public has a right to know the truth about how trillions of naira allocated to the Niger Delta were spent—or misappropriated," said Oluwadare. "Without access to this report, democratic accountability remains out of reach."

The lawsuit, filed by lawyers Kolawole Oluwadare, Kehinde Oyewumi, and Andrew Nwankwo, underscores growing public demand for transparency in how federal allocations to the Niger Delta have been used—or squandered.

## NDLEA Seizes Large Cache of Illicit Drugs Across Seven States, Arrests 15 Suspects

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has intercepted significant quantities of illicit drugs in a series of coordinated raids across seven states, arresting 15 suspects in the process.

The operations, carried out between Wednesday and Saturday last week, led to the seizure of banned substances including Tramadol, opioids, methamphetamine, cannabis, cocaine, and heroin, according to NDLEA

spokesperson Femi Babafemi.

In Kano State, a suspected trafficker was apprehended with 36,000 pills of Tramadol along the Danbatta-Kazare road on Wednesday. Two days later, operatives in Gombe arrested a suspect at the Gombe Roundabout with 25,000 pills of Tramadol and Exol-5. On the same day, two more suspects were nabbed in Kwadom, Yemaltu Deba LGA, with 49 blocks of compressed skunk weighing

29kg.

In Borno State, NDLEA officers intercepted 74,360 opioid pills from a 44-year-old suspect traveling in a Mercedes Benz along Baga Road, Maiduguri, on Saturday.

A separate intelligence-led operation in Narayi High Cost area of Chikun LGA, Kaduna State, resulted in the arrest of three suspects the same day.

In Bayelsa, a 63-year-old grandmother was caught with 163 liters of "skuchies"

— a locally brewed psychoactive substance — in the Osiri area of Yenagoa on Thursday.

Along the Okene-Lokoja highway in Kogi State, four suspects were apprehended while transporting 2kg of methamphetamine from Onitsha to Minna.

In Abia State, a notorious drug dealer's base was raided, with officers recovering quantities of Tramadol, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and

N736,000 in cash.

Also, a popular hotel in Lagos State—allegedly run as a family operation—was raided for distributing party drugs. The NDLEA seized 1.3kg of cannabis, 900g of cannabis-infused gummies, 22.9g of skunk, and impounded three vehicles from the premises.

The NDLEA says it remains committed to intensifying its nationwide crackdown on drug trafficking and abuse.



## Religion

# Operating In The Supernatural!

By Bishop David Oyedepo

**W**elcome to August! Thank God for taking us through the school of divine wisdom all through the month of July 2019 and my prayer is that each one of us shall begin to walk in the reality of wisdom from above, with undeniable proofs from this time onward, in the name of Jesus Christ! Today, we shall focus on: **Operating in the Supernatural!**

According to scriptures, every child of God has been redeemed a sign and a wonder to the world (Mark 16:20). The supernatural is a sign or an act that cannot be explained by natural laws yet cannot be denied. For it is written, Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14; see also John 3:8;

Daniel 3:22-27). Also, the supernatural is the finger and the outstretched arm of God at work (Exodus 8:19; Deuteronomy 26:8). Finally, it is God's intervention in the affairs of men (Luke 7:11-16).

However, new birth is a fundamental requirement for operating in the supernatural because according to scriptures, every child of God is born a sign and a wonder, Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion (Isaiah 8:18).

At New Birth, Certain Things Take Place in Our Lives

1. Our Human Life is exchanged for Eternal Life: For it is written, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16; see also Romans 6:23, 16:20). So, whatever eternal life cannot tolerate is not permitted to happen in our lives.

2. Our Natural Life is exchanged for Supernatural Life: According to John 3:8, The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it

cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

3. The Word of God must dwell in us richly: According to scriptures, the supernatural manifestations at creation are a combination of the move of the Spirit and the revelation of the Word. Genesis 1:1-2 says, In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth. And the earth was without

form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. The Spirit of God moved upon the waters which is the Word of God (Ephesians 5:26).

In conclusion, since the Holy Ghost is the Grand Commander of the supernatural, as believers we must be baptised in the Holy Ghost and be committed to growing in power thereby growing in our level of command of the supernatural. However, commanding the supernatural is practically impossible without a relationship with the Holy Spirit; and that comes through new birth experience. 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

of 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: *Walking in the Miraculous, Operating in the Supernatural, Releasing the Supernatural and Commanding the Supernatural*. I invite you to fellowship with us at the Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, Ota, the covenant home of Winners. We have four services on Sundays, holding at 6:00 a.m., 7:50 a.m., 9:40 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. respectively.

I know this teaching has blessed you. Write and share your testimony with me through: Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, Ota, P.M.B. 21688, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria.

**However, new birth is a fundamental requirement for operating in the supernatural because according to scriptures, every child of God is born a sign and a wonder**

## Family Matters

By Pastor Faith Oyedepo

**I** shall be discussing on Marriage as a Lifetime Covenant.

I want to start by looking at the origin of marriage. In Genesis 2:18-25, we see God initiating the idea of male and female relationship, in which both will serve as succour to each other. The purpose of God in marriage is to create a help that is suitable, adaptable and complementary, to establish unity and for procreation.

What is Marriage?

Marriage is a union between one man and one woman. It is coming together of two people of opposite sex, with a view to building a God-centred home. Marriage is not the culture of any country of the world, rather it is heaven's culture. Marriage is God's idea, not man's idea. The Word of God says: And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the

flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man (Genesis 2:21-22).

God in His infinite wisdom knew that man would have some needs and desires to satisfy, which cannot be satisfied by animals and other things He created. So, He brought out the idea of marriage, and formed a helpmeet for man.

It is important for us to know that in the beginning of the institution called marriage, God did not introduce marriage between people of the same sex, but between a man and woman. People of the world have perverted what God Himself has formed for man and his wife to enjoy. In the beginning, it was not so. Homosexuality is really growing fast in various countries of the world today. God's rule has been laid down concerning this abominable thing. The Word of God says: Thou

shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination (Leviticus 18:22).

Scripturally, marriage is for a lifetime. It is, therefore, not to be entered into without knowing what you are going into. It is very important for you to know what marriage is and is not, before you say, "I do" to anyone. You need to hear the testimony of this sister.

"When I was ready for marriage, I noticed that some things were working against me. But I was not a serious Christian then. However, when I dedicated my life fully to Jesus Christ in 1992, it became obvious. But I lacked wisdom and counsel and I was emotionally immature.

All the same, I got married, and the Lord has been merciful. But on joining this church, through the different ministrations, my life and marriage acquired meaning and direction. Now my marriage is established and I am free from all manner of oppressions of the wicked.

My family has been

increased remarkably and I now apply myself to the wisdom of God that He has imparted to me by reason of the teachings and ministrations I get here!"

Opara, C.C.N.

God ordained marriage for man and woman to give and receive satisfaction and to meet the needs and desires of one another. This marriage relationship is very unique since it involves the spirit, soul and body of two individuals. As long as the couples are born again and their lives have been transformed, they now become new creatures and therefore belong to the same spiritual Kingdom.

Our father, Abraham knew the importance of this and he told his servant to go to his people and get a wife for his son. The Word of God says: And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh. And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son

of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell (Genesis 24:2-3).

In the realm of the soul, both husband and wife should have the same mind concerning issues of life, especially the way they live, as regards the doctrines of the Holy Bible. There must be an agreement between the couple, before they can really walk in the principles of the Bible. The Bible advises: Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3).

It is important therefore, for us to know that there is no agreement between light and darkness. So, as a believer in Christ that is regenerated, you are not permitted to even consider an unbeliever for marriage. The Word of God says: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what

agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

To have a good marriage and a successful family, you need to first have a good stand with God. To do that, you need to confess your sins and surrender your life to Him. Do you want to do so now? Say this prayer in faith:

Dear Lord Jesus, I come to You today as a sinner. I believe You died for my sins and rose on the third day. Forgive me of my sins. I accept You as my Lord and Saviour. Make me a child of God today.

Congratulations! You are now born-again! All-round rest and peace are guaranteed you, in Jesus' Name.

For more insight, these books authored by me are available at the Dominion Bookstores in all Living Faith Churches and other leading Christian bookstores:

## Photos Speak



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State (6th R), [Dr. Mario Santiago, Chief Executive of America Home Aid Health Training Institute, Westbury, New York, USA, (6th L), Alternate Chair. of the Board of Trustees, Lux Mundi University, Abia State, Prof. Ahmed Abubakar Audi (5th R) and others, during the University's Mgt visit to Abia Gov.



Gov. Alex Otti of Abia State (c), his deputy, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu (4th L), Sen. Darlington Nwokocha (2nd L) and others, during the NEC meeting of Labour party for the inauguration of the Interim National Working Committee (NWC), at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja



A cross section of participants during the NEC meeting of Labour party for the inauguration of the Interim National Working Committee (NWC), at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja



L-R: Gov of Imo State, Sen. Hope Uzodinma and Deputy Speaker of the House of Reps, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu, during the South-East Zonal Constitution Review Public Hearing held in Owerri, Imo State



R-L: Abia Deputy Gov, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu, Deputy Speaker of the House of Reps, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu, Gov of Imo State, Sen. Hope Uzodinma and others, during the South-East Zonal Constitution Review Public Hearing held in Owerri, Imo State



R-L: Gov Alex Otti of Abia State and Dr. Mario Santiago, Chief Executive of America Home Aid Health Training Institute, Westbury, New York, USA, who came to Nigeria to profile the 50 Students of Nursing Science of Lux Mundi University, approved by the American govt for student exchange programme next month, during the University's Mgt visit to Abia Gov.



R-L: Gov Alex Otti of Abia State and the Alternate Chair of the Board of Trustees, Lux Mundi University, Abia State, Prof. Ahmed Abubakar Audi, who is also the Commandant General of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, during the University's Mgt visit to Abia Gov.



## Photos Speak



A cross section of Participants, during the South-East Zonal Constitution Review Public Hearing held in Owerri, Imo State



Gov Alex of Otti of Abia (3rd L), the Minister in charge of Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abayi Aba, Very Rev. Aniekabasi Edim and others, during their 15th year Anniversary Celebration and Thanksgiving Service.



Gov Alex of Otti of Abia being welcomed by the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Abayi Dominion Parish, during their 15th year Anniversary Celebration and Thanksgiving Service, Aba.



Rector, Ogbommaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba, Engr. Dr. Christopher Kalu Okoro (1st L), Comm for Tertiary Education Prof Eme Uche Eme (2nd L), and others, during the Inspection of the Osisioma Campus of Ogbommaya Onu Polytechnic by the Comm. for Tertiary Education Prof Eme Uche Eme and the Rector Ogbommaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba, Engr. Dr. Christopher Kalu Okoro.



L-R: Gov Alex Otti of Abia State and President of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Comrade Joe Ajaero, during the NEC meeting of Labour party for the inauguration of the Interim National Working Committee (NWC), at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja



Women Advocate Group canvassing for the allocation of 182 reserved seats in the National Assembly and State Assemblies during the South-East Zonal Public Hearing on the review of the 1999 Constitution, held recently in Owerri, Imo State.



L-R: Gov. Alex Otti of Abia State, his deputy, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu and Sen. Darlington Nwokocha, during the NEC meeting of Labour party for the inauguration of the Interim National Working Committee (NWC), at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja

Photos By Chukwu Chidiebere



## News



President Bola Amed Tinubu

### Return Extra Fees Paid by Students - NELFUND Tells Schools

By Nneoma Stephanie

**T**he Managing Director of the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND), Akintunde Sawyerr, has asked universities and other higher institutions to refund money to students who paid their school fees before NELFUND sent payments on their behalf.

Speaking at a media event in Abuja recently, Sawyerr warned that if schools do not cooperate, it could damage public trust and affect the future of the programme.

He explained that the student loan scheme, launched on May 24, 2024, was quickly put in place by President Bola Tinubu to stop students from dropping out of school due to financial hardship.

"The president wanted us to act fast because many students even those in their

final years were about to quit school due to lack of money," Sawyerr said. "That's why we started in the middle of the school year."

Because the programme started urgently, it didn't always match with school calendars or fee deadlines. As a result, some students had to pay their fees themselves — often by borrowing money — only for NELFUND to later pay the same fees to the schools.

"In those cases, the schools must return the extra money to the students," Sawyerr said. "Some schools have done this, but others have not, and it's causing more stress for students who are already struggling."

He also said the issue had drawn attention from anti-corruption agencies like the ICPC and EFCC, after

students filed complaints and the media reported the matter.

"We, as an organisation, have been questioned, and so have the schools. We're not protecting anyone. If the schools can't pay the students directly, they should return the money to us so we can give it back to the students," he added.

"There are young people trying to move forward in life, and schools are making things harder. I urge all institutions — do the right thing and refund the students."

Sawyerr also stressed the need to protect the credibility of the loan programme. He warned that false information could scare away private investors, whose support is crucial for the programme's future.

"This isn't just about

helping students — it's a national project to transform lives," he said. "If you love Nigeria, you'll support this. We can't let misinformation ruin something that's already bringing hope to thousands."

Also speaking at the event, NELFUND's Executive Director of Operations, Muspaha Iyal, said the organisation is working with the Ministry of Education to help roll out a new Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme.

According to Iyal, the TVET programme has already received nearly one million applications. While it is currently funded through grants, NELFUND plans to offer student loans to support the programme in the future.

### FG Aims for Growth Through Aviation PPP Reforms

The Federal Government wants to grow the aviation sector by partnering with private companies to improve infrastructure and services.

Dr. Ibrahim Kana, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development, said this during the 2025 Airport Business Summit and Expo (ABSE) held in Lagos.

He explained that aviation is important for boosting the economy, trade, tourism, investment, and connecting the country locally and internationally.

Under President Bola Tinubu's "Renewed Hope Agenda," the government is focused on using Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to grow the aviation and aerospace industries in a sustainable way.

According to Kana, the ministry is working within the rules set by the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC) to introduce PPP projects that improve the aviation sector. These include:

Allowing private companies to manage airport terminals in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Kano.

Using the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) method for cargo terminals, maintenance areas, and airport hotels.

He said some of these partnerships have already made a big difference. One good example is the management of Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal II (MMA2), which is seen as a model for PPP success in West Africa.

He also mentioned that recent approvals by the Federal Executive Council for more airport PPPs show that the government wants to bring in private money and innovation.

Kana noted that working with global organizations like the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the African Development Bank helps the government fund airport projects without using too much public money.

For these partnerships to work well, he said, Nigeria must have a stable, clear, and fair system. That's why the ministry is working with other government agencies to make things simpler and reduce risks for investors.

He also said Nigeria's Airport Development Master Plan matches the country's economic goals and is backed by new laws and stronger oversight from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA).

He added that improvements in safety and security at airports make Nigeria more attractive to investors.

Future PPP plans include air traffic services, airport cities (aerotropolis), and space technology parks. Kana believes Nigeria has the potential to be a key hub for air travel, aircraft maintenance, and even space research in the region.

He called on both local and international investors to see Nigeria as a long-term business partner.

Kana assured that the government is focused on keeping air travel safe, improving infrastructure, and working closely with private partners.

He also encouraged the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) to lead the development of airport master plans, instead of the ministry doing it.

Meanwhile, ABSE's Managing Director, Mr. Fortune Idu, said there should be a detailed review of how airport land is used. He believes this would stop unplanned land use and help future airport development.

Idu complained that many federal airports have more tanker farms than airplanes and that several government agencies are using valuable land poorly, which causes overcrowding.

This, he said, blocks airport expansion, business growth, and reduces the economic value of airports.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported that this is the 10th edition of the ABSE, and this year's theme is Investment Opportunities in Airport Public-Private Partnerships.

NAN

### Atlanta Agog As Pst Jerry Eze Leads Miracle Prayer Conference

By Okechukwu Ubani

Thousands of people gathered in Atlanta, Georgia, over the weekend for a powerful prayer conference led by Nigerian pastor and global revival leader, Pastor Jerry Eze. The event was part of his growing global movement, "What God Cannot Do Does Not Exist," which continues to attract millions across continents.

Held at a packed venue in the city, the conference drew people from across the United States and beyond — all coming with faith, seeking healing, breakthroughs, and spiritual renewal. For many, it was their first time attending the program in person after following Pastor Eze's daily online

prayer sessions.

"This is not just a meeting, it's a move of God," Pastor Eze told the crowd. "We are here to encounter the power of Jesus and to witness impossible situations turn around through prayer."

The atmosphere was intense and emotional. There were moments of passionate worship, cries of prayer, and public testimonies of healing from chronic illnesses, restoration of broken families, and unexpected financial breakthroughs.

Some attendees broke down in tears as they shared stories of how God had already touched their lives through Pastor Eze's online prayers. "I had no job for two years," said one woman from Texas. "After joining the prayers, doors opened.

That's why I flew here to thank God in person."

Others came with deep burdens — health struggles, family issues, or financial stress — but left feeling renewed and full of hope. "I believe my testimony will come next," said a man who traveled from Canada. "The presence of God here is real."

Pastor Eze, founder of Streams of Joy International, has seen his online platform grow into a global movement, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. His daily livestreamed prayer sessions now attract millions of viewers from over 100 countries.

The Atlanta prayer conference is one of several scheduled across the United States and other parts of the

world. Cities like New York, Houston, London, and Johannesburg are next on the tour list.

Security was tight and volunteer teams worked tirelessly to manage the large crowd, assist with prayer requests, and ensure smooth coordination. Local church leaders in Atlanta also lent their support to the event.

As the program came to a close, Pastor Eze led the crowd in one final prayer and left them with a powerful reminder: "God is still working. Don't give up your miracle is loading." The event ended with joyful singing, dancing, and countless people leaving encouraged, strengthened, and expectant for the next move of God.



## News

### Stakeholders Urge Traditional Rulers To Give Women Farmers Access To Farmland

**A**gricultural stakeholders have called on traditional rulers to end cultural practices that prevent women farmers from accessing farmland in rural communities. The appeal was made at a policy dialogue meeting in Enugu, supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through its Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP). The event, titled "Gender Action Learning System (GALS) Policy Dialogue with Relevant Stakeholders for Institutionalisation and Scaling Up of GALS in Enugu State," aimed to promote gender equality in agriculture. According to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the GALS methodology, developed by IFAD, is a gender-focused approach designed to empower women and promote equality through community

engagement.

Speaking at the meeting, the State Commissioner for Agriculture and Agro-Industrialisation, Mr. Patrick Ubru (represented by the Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Mr. Victor Ngwu), urged traditional rulers to make land more accessible to women and youths. He also called on them to review and reform harmful traditional practices that restrict women from owning or using land. Ubru explained that the state government had created a Land Bank by acquiring land from communities and distributing it to interested women, young people, and investors. "We've also launched the Farm Estate Initiative, where each ward is expected to donate 200 hectares of land. From that, 200 farmers in each community will receive one hectare each," he said.

He added that the government

understands the challenges women face in getting farmland and is working hard to change that.

Ubru praised the positive impact of the GALS programme in improving family and community life and pledged continued support.

Also speaking at the event, farmer Mrs. Nnenna Ejim called on communities and the state government to allocate 50% of available farmland to women and 30% to young people.

The traditional ruler of Mbu-Akpoti in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area, Igwe Sunday Agbo, welcomed the initiative and said it would help address gender inequality.

However, he advised women to push for political reforms that would give them a stronger voice in making laws—especially laws that could override unfair traditional practices. He added that with time, many harmful traditions would be eliminated and that successful women could buy land independently without relying on family property.

Earlier, Mr. Humphrey Ubanyi, Gender and Youth Officer of VCDP in Enugu, said the GALS policy dialogue was organized because of the great success the programme had achieved.

He explained that GALS was introduced in Enugu in 2021 and had led to big improvements in gender roles, family harmony, and women's empowerment.

"In 2023, we expanded the GALS programme to all local government areas where VCDP operates," he said.

"Thanks to GALS, more women now take part in family decision-making, own assets, and control their income. Men are also supporting their wives with house chores, which reduces the burden on women. "The programme has also helped reunite couples and rebuild broken families."

Ubanyi said the aim of the meeting was to encourage stakeholders to adopt and continue the GALS programme even after the VCDP ends in the state.

He also thanked the State Programme Coordinator of VCDP in Enugu, Dr. Edward Isiwu, for his strong support.

Source NAN

### Katsina Government Extends Maternity Leave For Nursing Mothers.

**T**he Katsina State Government has approved longer maternity leave for nursing mothers working in the state civil service. The new leave period is now four months and 10 days.

This was announced by Alhaji Abdullahi Aliyu-Turaji, Principal Private Secretary to Governor Dikko Radda, during a meeting with officials from the Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN), who were on a courtesy visit.

Aliyu-Turaji said the decision was made at a State Executive Council meeting. He explained that the extension from the previous three months was partly based on cultural and religious reasons, particularly the 'Iddah' period for widows.

During the visit, Mr. Abdurrahman Abdullahi, Secretary of CS-SUNN in Katsina, said their goal was to push for a six-month maternity leave policy for breastfeeding mothers.

He also called for more funding and timely release of money meant for child nutrition programmes, especially the one-to-one matching grant used for nutrition-related projects.

"We thank Almighty Allah that the government is thinking ahead and has been paying the agreed funds," he said. "Surprisingly, we also learned that maternity leave has already been extended to four months and 10 days. This is great news for working mothers."

He praised the government for its commitment, saying the move will support and encourage nursing mothers in the public sector and promote exclusive breastfeeding, which gives babies a healthy start in life. Earlier, during a breakfast meeting, Mr. Muna

Nzelibe, CS-SUNN Programme Officer, said investing in nutrition is important for the country's future and economic well-being.

He noted that globally, one in three people suffers from malnutrition, and Nigeria has the second-highest number of stunted children in the world.

"In Katsina, 65% of children under five are stunted, 26.8% are underweight, and 6.7% are wasted," he said, quoting the 2023 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). "This is very serious and needs urgent attention."

The meeting focused on pushing for six months of paid maternity leave, raising awareness about child nutrition, and calling for increased funding for nutrition programmes.

Nzelibe said the group urged state health and budget agencies to ensure proper funding and monitoring of nutrition efforts, including the implementation of the new maternity leave policy.

He also called on all stakeholders to work with the government to make sure the policy is carried out properly and that working mothers are supported without misuse of the system.

Nzelibe added that there should be continuous collaboration with the State House of Assembly to monitor nutrition programmes and ensure good results.

According to NAN, the team also met with key stakeholders, including Dr. Kamal Kabir, the Coordinator of the State Community Development Programme, who promised full support, especially for nutrition initiatives.

The event was organized by CS-SUNN with support from UNICEF and brought together people from various sectors.

Source NAN

### EERC Slashes Band A Electricity Tariff In Enugu, Freezes Others

*By Stephanie Adindu*

**R**esidents in Enugu State on Band A electricity supply will enjoy a major relief starting August 1, 2025, as the Enugu State Electricity Regulatory Commission (EERC) has slashed the tariff from ₦209/kWh to ₦160/kWh.

The commission who disclosed this, also announced that tariffs for Bands B, C, D, and E will remain unchanged.

The new rate follows a review of cost and subsidy structures by the EERC and was issued under Order No. EERC/2025/003. The Commission emphasized that the revised tariff reflects the federal government's ongoing subsidy on electricity generation, aimed at easing the financial burden on consumers.

Chairman of the EERC, Chijioke Okonkwo, explained that the review was part of efforts to ensure fair pricing by MainPower Electricity Distribution Limited – the new utility company replacing the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) in the state. "Our calculations, based on

the 2024 Tariff Methodology Regulations and Distribution Tariff Model, arrived at an average cost-reflective price of ₦194," Okonkwo said. "This is largely due to the federal subsidy that offsets part of the generation cost."

He warned, however, that if the federal subsidy is withdrawn, tariffs could rise significantly. "But until that happens, Band A customers in Enugu can enjoy reduced rates," he added.

In a move to ensure accountability, EERC mandated MainPower to publicly disclose the daily average hours of electricity supplied to Band A feeders and report any service shortfalls. If the company fails to meet the promised service levels for seven consecutive days, the affected feeder will be downgraded automatically. The EERC reaffirmed its commitment to transparency, regulation, and better electricity access for all residents of Enugu State, in line with the state's 2023 Electricity Law and the national Electricity Act 2023, which empowers states to regulate their own power sectors.

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## Opinion

# Buhari's Moral Compass and Public Service

By *Dakuku Peterside*

**I**n the quiet moments that follow the passing of a leader, a nation is compelled to reflect not just on what was done, but on who the person truly was. Muhammadu Buhari's death has reopened that conversation in Nigeria, not in anger or celebration, but in contemplation. He was a man often described in simple terms: austere, disciplined, incorruptible. And yet, these same qualities, so admired in his private life, sit uncomfortably alongside the complicated legacy of his time in public office. The gap between Buhari's moral compass and the moral weight of statecraft is where the story becomes truly reflective. In that space lies the tension between character and consequences—between being good and doing good.

I find myself returning repeatedly to the image of Buhari as a lone sentinel of probity. In a nation where ostentation is sometimes mistaken for success, his frugal lifestyle felt almost subversive. He lived simply: a modest home, a small entourage, and a work schedule that eschewed pomp. He paid his electricity bills, avoided lavish ceremonies, and chose to live without the typical grandeur associated with power. For millions of Nigerians, that simplicity resonated like a quiet protest against decades of elite excess. In a country exhausted by leaders who flaunted stolen wealth and treated public office as a reward for loyalty, Buhari was something else—someone who did not steal, did not hoard, and did not bow to the seduction of a corrupt system.

There was dignity in his restraint, and it became a powerful symbol of his character. To see a President or leader of his stature move through daily life without expectation of privilege was—paradoxically—both reassuring and unsettling. It reassured because it demonstrated that integrity need not be a rhetorical flourish; it unsettled because it forced us to ask why so few before him had displayed the same restraint. Ordinary citizens felt that even if he did nothing else, at least he would not rob them. That sentiment became his greatest political currency. It won him not just elections but deep emotional trust. In many ways, Buhari did not have supporters—he had believers.

But personal virtue, as noble as it is, does not always translate into public good. Running a nation is inherently a collective endeavour: it demands robust institutions, vigilant watchdogs, and a willingness to enforce standards, even when it may bruise the powerful. Here, Buhari's presidency exhibited a curious dichotomy. On one hand, he spoke constantly of anti corruption, lending moral authority to bodies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. On the other hand, his administration sometimes seemed content to rest on symbolic gestures. This approach, rather than concrete actions, disappointed the public and eroded their trust. High-profile arrests gave way to charge-and-release cycles; institutional reforms were launched with fanfare but lacked sustained follow-through.

Buhari, the man of honour, often failed to hold others to the same standard. And in a society where corruption is rarely subtle

and almost always systemic, his silence, abdication or hesitation became complicity in the eyes of many. The same presidency that rose on the promise to end corruption saw some of the most brazen financial misconduct in recent memory. In 2022, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arraigned the Accountant-General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris, for embezzling over N109 billion. Despite Buhari's anti-corruption rhetoric, the prosecution dragged, and no significant convictions followed during his tenure. The Auditor-General's 2020 report revealed that over N300 billion in public funds were unaccounted for across MDAs, yet few consequences followed. Government under his watch borrowed recklessly, and by the time Buhari left office in May 2023, Nigeria's public debt had ballooned to N77 trillion, up from N12.6 trillion in 2015—a six-fold increase. While Buhari himself was not personally implicated in theft, the system he presided over remained vulnerable and largely unrestrained.

The contradictions extended beyond money. His appointments, which tilted heavily toward the North, sent troubling signals in a diverse country already strained by ethnic suspicion. Of the 47 top security and intelligence appointments made during his first term, 35 came from

was palpable, cutting deeper precisely because the promise had been credible. Similarly, when sectors of the population saw apparent favouritism toward certain ethnic or regional groups, the sense of betrayal felt acute, especially given the trust he had cultivated through years of personal honesty. These dynamics highlight a delicate balance: trust must be earned anew in each policy decision, rather than being merely inherited from personal reputation. A ruler who demonstrates personal restraint can shake the public's cynicism—but only to the extent that their administration consistently enforces the same standards across all levels of power.

And yet, to judge Buhari solely by the weaknesses of his government is to miss the deeper question. What happens when a morally upright individual is placed at the helm of a morally broken system? Buhari tried to steer a bureaucracy bloated by patronage and haunted by inertia. He brought personal sincerity to a structure designed for self-interest. And while he spoke often of reform, few could point to enduring systemic overhauls. There were attempts to promote transparency—like the launch of the Open Treasury Portal in 2019, aimed at publishing real-time government expenditure—but even that portal was marred by ghost transactions and inflated figures, according to BudgetIT's

**And yet, to judge Buhari solely by the weaknesses of his government is to miss the deeper question. What happens when a morally upright individual is placed at the helm of a morally broken system? Buhari tried to steer a bureaucracy bloated by patronage and haunted by inertia**

the North, and 31 were Muslims. These figures raised concerns about inclusivity, national cohesion, and the perception of a government run through narrow identity lenses. The public's perception of nepotism became difficult to ignore. Farmers across the Middle Belt and South reeled from deadly herder attacks—over 7,400 people were killed in farmer-herder conflicts between 2015 and 2021, according to the International Crisis Group—while many felt Buhari's government offered muted responses or lacked urgency. His critics pointed not just to what he did, but to what he failed to do. Why did he hesitate to sack underperforming officials? Why did he remain loyal to individuals facing credible allegations of abuse, mismanagement, or excess?

Buhari's brand of leadership also shaped public expectations in ways both inspiring and challenging. When he vowed to defeat Boko Haram 'within months,' many believed him, buoyed by his military background and reputation for decisive action. However, when those promises fell short, the disappointment

2020 report. He did not restructure the civil service. He did not radically modernise the judiciary. Procurement remained opaque, oversight agencies remained weak, and corruption adapted, evolved, and often flourished—sometimes right under his nose.

The force of personal example was powerful, but insufficient. A nation does not change because a single man is honest; it changes because systems force everyone else to be.

Still, people remembered. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the Director-General of the World Trade Organisation, spoke of his "undeniable discipline." William Kumuyi, founder of the Deeper Life Church, praised his contentment and restraint. Aisha Buhari, his wife, described him as a man who lived and died for Nigeria. Even Olusegun Obasanjo, often his fiercest political critic, acknowledged Buhari's honesty. "We disagreed on policy," Obasanjo said, "but no one can deny Buhari's honesty." Perhaps the most telling tribute came from a roadside trader in Kano: "Even if he does nothing, he won't

steal." That kind of trust is not easily earned. In a country where betrayal often seems baked into politics, Buhari's restraint stood out—not as a tactic, but as a truth.

But moral leadership cannot stop at the self. There must be systems. There must be consequences. There must be reform that survives beyond one's tenure. Buhari's story, then, is not one of moral failure—it is one of moral incompleteness. He brought integrity to the presidency but lacked the boldness or ruthlessness to make others live by the same creed. He governed with clean hands but allowed too many others to stain the system. And the paradox of his legacy is that he leaves behind both admiration and disappointment. He showed that it is possible to lead without greed, but also that it is not enough.

As I reflect on Buhari's journey, I am struck by a simple truth: moral integrity sets the horizon, but it does not chart the course. Leaders of conscience can illuminate the highest ideals—but without the ballast of strong institutions and the courage to apply principles impartially, good intentions will drift inexorably into compromise. For aspiring leaders, the lesson is twofold. First, cultivate a personal ethic that resists the seductive ease of privilege and self interest. Second—and perhaps more daunting—build systems that outlast any one individual's lifespan: independent judiciaries, transparent procurement processes, and unflinching oversight bodies. Moral leadership is not solely a matter of character; it is also a question of architecture.

Nigeria has always longed for a leader it can believe in. Buhari, for many, was that figure. But belief must give way to expectation. The future must demand more. We must move beyond celebrating leaders for what they do not take and begin to judge them by what they give, build, and enforce. Buhari's moral compass pointed north—but a compass alone cannot carry a nation. It must be matched with energy, with discipline, with institutional vision.

In the end, Buhari bequeathed to Nigeria a paradox that stirs both admiration and frustration. He proved that a head of state could live unencumbered by corruption. Yet he also showed us that the purity of personal example, on its own, cannot bend the vast forces of patronage, inertia, and political expediency. When we speak of "Mai Gaskiya," the truthful one, let us remember the truth of his tenure: that personal integrity is a precious, but incomplete, remedy for the ailments of governance. The true challenge lies in transforming individual virtue into collective virtue—an enduring inheritance for the generations that follow.

In that endeavour, Buhari's life offers both inspiration and caution, reminding us that moral leadership demands more than clean hands; it requires an unwavering dedication to shaping institutions that keep those hands honest. Buhari's memory should remind us not only of what is possible in the moral character of a leader, but also of how urgent it is to embed that character into the state's architecture. That, perhaps, is the work left unfinished. And that, perhaps, is the question the next generation must answer.



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## Foreign

### Trump Says Coca-Cola Might Switch to Cane Sugar —Is That Healthier?

**P**resident Donald Trump said Coca-Cola may start using cane sugar in its U.S. drinks instead of high-fructose corn syrup. He claims the company agreed to the change, but Coca-Cola hasn't confirmed it yet.

High-fructose corn syrup has been criticized by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. He called it a "recipe for obesity and diabetes" during an interview. Kennedy's "Make America Healthy Again" campaign is pushing food companies to remove certain ingredients like artificial dyes, seed oils, and this type of sweetener.

In the U.S., Coca-Cola uses high-fructose corn syrup. But in Mexico, Coke is made with cane sugar, one of the country's key exports.

Coca-Cola did not confirm Trump's announcement. The company said it can't comment further due to upcoming financial reports. However, it mentioned that more product updates will be shared soon.

Is cane sugar healthier than corn syrup?

Experts say not really. Both cane sugar and corn syrup are added sugars, and too much sugar — no matter the kind — is bad for your health.

"Drinking sugary soda is unhealthy, no matter which sweetener is used," said Eva Greenthal, a scientist with the Center for Science in the Public Interest. "It's just liquid sugar with no nutrition. Changing the type of sugar doesn't make soda healthier."

She added that the Trump administration should focus on reducing the overall amount of sugar in foods, not just switching ingredients. Her group, along with the New York City Health Department, is urging the FDA to set national limits on added sugar, just like it has done for sodium (salt).

Dr. Walter Willett from Harvard also said that stronger actions are needed. He suggested warning labels on sodas, limiting their sale in schools, and putting taxes on sugary drinks to fund kids' health programs.

**Corn Industry Pushes Back**

The Corn Refiners Association strongly opposes the possible switch to cane sugar. Its president, John Bode, said replacing corn syrup with cane sugar wouldn't improve health and would hurt American jobs, farmers, and increase sugar imports from other countries.



Source CNN

## UN Chief Honours Buhari, Praises Him As A Defender Of Africa

**U**nited Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has paid tribute to Nigeria's former President, Muhammadu Buhari, who recently passed away.

During a visit to Nigeria House in New York, Guterres expressed the UN's sympathy to the Nigerian government and people. He praised Buhari for his strong commitment to Nigeria, Africa, and international cooperation.

Guterres signed the condolence book, writing "On behalf of the United Nations, I offer deep condolences on the death of President Muhammadu Buhari. He will be remembered for his dedication to serving others, his efforts to bring peace and



António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

stability to Africa, and his work to strengthen Nigeria's institutions."

Guterres also noted that Buhari supported the United Nations and stood for global cooperation and sustainable

development. Speaking to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Guterres recalled working with Buhari and said he admired Buhari's service to his country, to Africa, and to

the global community. He described Buhari as a key figure in promoting peace and stability in West Africa and a respected leader in the region.

The UN chief extended

condolences to Buhari's family, the Nigerian government, and all Nigerians, saying Buhari's leadership and legacy will continue to inspire future generations.

Mr. Syndoph Endoni, Nigeria's representative at the UN, thanked Guterres for the visit, saying it showed how much Buhari was respected beyond Nigeria.

Other Nigerian officials, including Ambassador Bola Asaju and Mr. Razak Lawal, were present during the visit.

Buhari served as Nigeria's military ruler from 1983 to 1985 and later as an elected president from 2015 to 2023. He died in a hospital in London at the age of 82 and was buried in his hometown, Daura, Nigeria.

Source CNN

### As Trump Targets Texas to Win the House, Democrats Plan Their Response



Democrats in the U.S. House are getting ready for a tough political fight next year. Behind the scenes, they're preparing a response to former President Donald Trump's attempt to gain more control in Texas — a move that could help Republicans keep power in Washington during Trump's possible second term.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries and his team are working on a risky and possibly costly plan. They want to redraw congressional maps in Democratic-led states like California, New York, New Jersey, Minnesota, and Washington. Their goal is to flip a few Republican seats in next year's election.

This move comes as Democrats get ready to redraw maps in Texas to push out up to five Democratic members of Congress. That redistricting effort starts this week and could give the GOP a big advantage in the 2026 midterms.

In an interview, Jeffries made it clear that Democrats are ready to fight back.

"We have a duty to review every state and do what we can to make things fair," he said. "Some of the best lawyers in the country are reviewing all the options."

This is a bold step for Democrats, who have long argued against political gerrymandering — drawing voting maps for partisan advantage. Normally, redistricting happens only once every 10 years after the census. But Democrats are now considering changing maps outside that cycle to counter what they call unfair GOP tactics.

Some Democrats admit the plan might not work if courts block it. Others are concerned it could go against the party's long-standing push for nonpartisan, fair map-drawing. Still, many Democrats believe they must take action to avoid losing the House again — especially since only a few seats could decide which party holds the majority.

"We have to fight fire with fire," said Rep. Eric Swalwell of California, who's been working closely with Jeffries. "We can't just sit back and do nothing."

Texas Republicans say their push to redraw maps is to fix what they claim are unconstitutional and racially unfair districts. The Justice Department is also involved. When asked about Jeffries' claim that Republicans are trying to "rig the election," Republican Speaker of the House Mike Johnson dismissed it.

"That's ridiculous," Johnson said. "Jeffries is just playing politics too."

Jeffries mentioned California, New York, and New Jersey as states where Democrats could act. But party leaders are also looking at Minnesota and Washington.

Jeffries also said he plans to meet with New York Governor Kathy Hochul in August to talk about possible changes there. He said the current maps in New York aren't as fair as they should be, even though they were just redrawn last year.

Rep. Greg Meeks of New York, a close ally of Jeffries, summed it up:

"You can't show up to a fight where they have a gun and you have a knife."

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Democrat from New York, speaks during his weekly press conference on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

Source CNN

### Nigeria Calls For ECOWAS Standby Force To Be Ready For Peace Missions

**N**igeria has called for the urgent need to make the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) fully operational so it can help maintain peace and stability across West Africa.

Major General Umar Abubakar, from the Ministry of Defence, made this statement in Abuja during a meeting with regional experts to finalize the training policy for the ESF.

He said the new policy is a key step in turning the standby force from just an idea into a real force that can act quickly during conflicts in the region. He added that the ESF would also be part of the wider African Standby Force.

"This is an important moment for ECOWAS," Abubakar said. "We must work together to finish this

policy so it matches the challenges we face and our hope for lasting peace."

Dr. Sani Adamu, Acting Head of Peace Support Operations at ECOWAS, explained that the new policy is more than just a training guide. It also includes important values like human rights, gender equality, protection of civilians, and support for recovery after conflicts. He said the policy will help build a skilled, ready, and professional force that can handle the difficult and changing nature of peacekeeping missions in West Africa.

"Peace is not just about weapons and military plans," Adamu said. "It's also about working together and using our shared strengths to build lasting peace and security in the region."

Source NAN

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## Creative Writers Hangout

### Uche and the Sword (3)

**D**uring break, Uche joined other boys in the football pitch to play football. The seniors, JSS 3 boys refused to let the new boys join them. But since they were only 17 they allowed five JSS1 students to join them.

Uche was asked against his wish to keep the post. He had wanted to play outfield so that he could dribble and score goals.

When they started playing, Uche recognized one of his side strikers. He was sitting beside him in the class. His name was Uzo.

It was the opponents that attacked first with the male senior prefect, Kelechi dribbling pass three defenders and was facing Uche when he unleashed a powerful shot. Uche caught the ball with aplomb. Everybody in the pitch, including Kelechi clapped for him.

Few minutes later, Uzo picked the ball and tapped it over an opponent. The opponent recovered quickly, but Uzo tapped the ball over him again. The now furious opponent pushed Uzo down.

All the senior boys surrounded Uzo and quarrelled him for dribbling his senior in such embarrassing way. "Are you not afraid to dribble your senior?" one of them asked.

Uche was annoyed that they were quarreling Uzo instead of the offender. Uche left his post and ran to where others were gathered. He quarreled the senior boys with Igbo Language, while the seniors responded in English.

The seniors asked Uche and Uzo to leave the pitch and replaced them with other JSS1 students begging to play. Uche and Uzo left and became friends.

After school Uche and Uzo were walking home when the senior Uzo had dribbled waylaid them.

"I'm going to beat you up now." The senior snarled. Speaking in vernacular Uche asked the senior not to touch Uzo. The senior turned and slapped Uche.

Uche grabbed the senior's shirt drew him closer and gave him an upper cut that tore his lips.

The senior touched his lips and saw blood. He pulled off his shirt. Many students who had assembled to watch the fight shouted when they saw the senior's muscular body. Uche was not intimidated rather he noticed a sword tattoo on the senior's shoulder.

Uche gave Uzo his bag and was about pulling off his shirt when senior Kalu grabbed him. They started grabbing.

"Stop that!" the Mathematics teacher ordered. Both students left themselves and tried to explain to the teacher why they were fighting. "Come and see me tomorrow." He ordered and walked away.

Uche was not happy that the teacher had stopped him from dealing with Kalu the way he would have wanted. He was even more annoyed when he saw that his shirt had been stained with blood.

Most of the on looking students were very happy with what Uche did to Kalu. As the Labor Prefect, Kalu was notorious for bullying fellow students.

When Uche got home with bloodstained shirt, Kate knelt him down and flogged him all over his body with a bunch of broom.

Kate told her husband what happened and added some spices so that the gravity of Uche's sin will be heavy.

After dinner, Uche was called before the entire family.

"So you fought today in school and stained your uniform with blood?" Asonye asked. Before Uche could respond, Asonye flogged him.

The following morning Uche got to school late as he had to do a lot of household chores. Prefects were directing latecomers to pick dirt. Uche quickly joined. Before they could finish picking, the assembly was over so Uche ran into the class.

Thirty minutes before the break time, the bell rang and the students ran to the assembly as they

had been warned that the bell was the Principal's voice, so they must obey the bell.

Uche's heart sank into his sandals when he saw the Principal and the Labor Prefect standing on the podium.

"It grieves my heart", the Principal began "Whenever I have to address you students because of this type of matter that should not have occurred in the first place. I have said it time without number that I was never a prefect during my secondary school days because I was not found worthy to be one. Therefore I will not condone any form of insubordination by any students to my prefects not to talk of fighting them."

Uche held his hands together; his heart was beating so hard. Even though he did not understand most of the things the Principal said, his intuition told him that he was in a big trouble. He felt as if his heart was going to burst.

"To drive home my point", the Principal continued, "I am going to set example with Uche Obi."

Two prefects grabbed Uche and dragged him out. A table was set and Uche was asked to stretch out on the table.

"I am going to give him 12 strokes of the cane. As I flog him those who had in mind to disrespect my prefects should think twice."

As the strokes were administered the students counted. Uche was still as he received five strokes, then six, seven and eight. Uche could not bear it again. He jumped down from the table, squeezing his buttocks as hot tears cloud in his eyes.

"If I count three I'll cancel the former ones and start afresh." The Principal ordered. Uche lay back on the table trying to be as courageous as possible. Nine, ten, eleven. Uche made a loud shout and jumped down from the table.

"One, two..." before the Principal would finish counting Uche mustered all the courage in him to lay back and receive the last stroke.

From that day Uche became very popular especially among the students who liked how he dealt with the Labor Prefect.

Two weeks later everything was forgotten. Uche and Uzo started playing regularly for the school team. While Uche manned the goal, Uzo spearhead the attack.

Since he cannot understand the lessons, Uche lost interest in school and only went just to play football.

Expectantly, he failed the first term. On vacation day the Principal called out those that did very well and gave them prizes. On the other hand he called out those that did badly and flogged them. Uche received the highest strokes of cane. He failed all the twelve subjects, in fact his average score was 14. Uche was worried, but after some time he gave up any hope of learning how to speak, read and write good English.

Despite all the beating Kate and Asonye gave him for failing in the first term, he also failed the second term.

The three weeks holiday before the third term was very difficult for Uche. Kate stopped at nothing to ensure that Uche regretted his coming to the town.

One afternoon the kids were watching movie while Uche was busy fetching water. Uche had earlier cooked lunch of beans and ripe plantain, while Ifeoma did the sharing according to Kate's instructions before leaving for market. Uche was given the smallest share, but he cheerfully washed the plates after meal and started fetching water.

Each time he came back he heard raucous voices of the children playing in the parlor. It was on his eighth return that everywhere was quiet.

"What must have happened?" Uche thought. "May be aunty is back." That thought sent shivers down his spine as her return would mean trouble for him. Moreover he wanted to fetch water as

quickly as possible so he could attend a match between his street, Eket and Kaduna Street.

Uche poured in the water and went into the parlor. The three children were standing before their TV.

"Ifeanyi has broken our TV", Ifeoma reported to Uche.

Ifeanyi's face was filled with fear, "But, it was Ifeoma that caused it, she took my beans and I collected her own, she slapped me and started running I threw my spoon at her but it broke the TV."

"Oh! It is a lie", Ifeoma started, "He took my beans first before I took his own."

"You're a liar big head", Ifeanyi countered.

The two children started fighting. Uche tried to separate them, but they refused. Uche thought about beating both of them up but restrained himself when he remembered what Kate could do to him. As Ifeoma and Ifeanyi were running around, Ifeoma stepped on the shattered glasses her sole was lacerated.

"Mummy e!" she exclaimed.

At that point the fighting stopped. Uche acted quickly like a typical son of the soil. He plucked and squeezed independent grass and used it to stop the bleeding.

When Kate came back Uche was happy at least he did not contribute in any way to what happened. But he was wrong. He forgot that the cockroach could never be innocent in a gathering of hen.

It was Amaka that reported the incident to her mother. Kate rushed into the parlor and saw it was true. She went to the kitchen and gave Uche a thunderous slap that deafened him for some minutes.

Uche clasped his cheeks with both hands as the pain sink through his brain.

"Where did you go to?"

"Aunty, I went to fetch water." Uche sobbed.

"Even at that can't you take care of Ifeoma and her brothers?"

"But, Ifeoma is older than me why should I take care of her?"

Another slap was the answer Uche got for that question, "So you're big enough to query me?" Kate picked up a bunch of broom and flogged Uche until she could not find breath to raise her hand.

As soon as Uche got a space he ran out of the house. He was happy to leave so he could go and play the street match. So he headed straight to Urban School 4 Primary School field, which was already filled with spectators.

The atmosphere immediately aroused Uche's strong passion to play, but, the street team's coach refused to field him despite Uzo's recommendation.

However Uche derived so much pleasure watching the intriguing match that ended in a 2-2 draw. It was after the match that Uche remembered what was awaiting him at home.

Meanwhile Kate had quarrelled her children, but she had a plan for Uche.

"Ifeoma, Ifeanyi and Amaka, all of you should listen to me. When your father comes back, you'll tell him that it was Uche that broke the screen."

"But mummy it was Ifeanyi that broke it." Ifeoma corrected swiftly.

"Mummy I did it." Ifeanyi added.

"Both of you are fools. OK Ifeanyi will you want your father to flog you?" The young boy shook his head as the thought of his father flogging him dinned into him and quivered a nerve down his spine. "Ify will you want your daddy to flog Ifeanyi?"

"No Mummy."

"So you must say it's Uche so that he'll receive the lashing." Kate concluded her evil scheme.

**What will Asonye do to Uche? Is his stay in the town coming to an end? Find out in our next publication.**

### AUTHOR OF THE WEEK



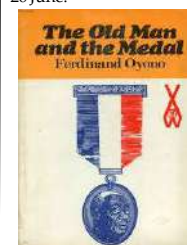
#### Ferdinand Oyono

**O**yono was born near Ebolowa in the South Province of Cameroon on September 14, 1929. After obtaining his secondary education in Yaounde, Oyono studied in Paris. Following Cameroon's independence, Oyono was a member of the Cameroonian delegation to the United Nations in 1960, when the country was admitted to the UN. Oyono subsequently served as Cameroon's ambassador to various countries from 1965 to 1974.

From 1974 to 1982 he was Cameroon's Permanent Representative to the United Nations; he acted as President of the United Nations Security Council in place of the United Kingdom's Ivor Richard at the 1,866th meeting of the Security Council on 16 December 1975, and was Chairman of UNICEF from 1977 to 1978.

Oyono's novels were written in French in the late 1950s and were only translated into English a decade or two afterward. They include *Houseboy*, translated into English in 1965, *The Old Man and the Medal* translated into English in 1967 and *Road to Europe* translated into English in 1989.

80-year-old Oyono died suddenly in Yaounde on 10 June 2010 and was buried at Ngoazip, near Ebolowa, on 26 June.



#### CITATIONS INSPIRANTES

"Reading is a key to past, present, and future -- a path into virtually limitless treasures of knowledge and inspiration".

- Nancy Reagan, former first lady of the United States.



## Sporting Ambassador



# Countdown To 2024 Chan: Focus on Group B

In continuation of our countdown to the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the African Nations Championship, Sporting Ambassador beams its search light on Group B comprising of Tanzania, Madagascar, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Central African Republic.

### TANZANIA

**Tanzania secured their place in the CHAN as one of the host alongside Kenya and Uganda and they will be making their third appearance.**

The Taifa Stars will be led by coach Hemed Morocco, who is highly experienced. He will build his team around Clement Mzize, who has been in great form this season with 14 goals in the Tanzanian Premier League.

Another man to watch is Feisal Salum, a creative midfielder with an eye for goal. His visual and composure will be indispensable for the Taifa Stars. He scored vital goals in the AFCON qualifiers.

### MADAGASCAR

The Barea of Madagascar stunned the continent and the world at large when they finished third in their debut appearance at the CHAN at the last edition.

With the technical prowess of Ronald Rakotonrabre, the Madagascans are aiming for higher accomplishments this time.

They booked their place for the 2024 CHAN after securing a 2-0 home victory over Eswatini in the first leg, which made their lone goal loss in the second leg inconsequential as they qualified on 2-1 aggregate.

Watch out for John Christiano Razafimanana. The 23-year-old forward was instrumental in Madagascar's qualification campaign, scoring in the crucial first-leg victory over Eswatini. His blistering speed, positional awareness, and clinical finishing

has made him indispensable for his team.

There is also Nina Razakanirina, a midfield dynamo. Razakanirina is celebrated for his impeccable passing and ability to control the tempo of the game. His creativity and vision enable him to link defense and attack seamlessly, while his work rate ensures stability in the center of the pitch. Razakanirina will be pivotal in orchestrating Madagascar's dynamic play at CHAN 2024.

### MAURITANIA

Les Mourabitounes of Mauritania will be at the CHAN with high hopes of surpassing their past achievements.

Having previously made three appearances, Mauritania's best showing came in the last edition held in Algeria, where they reached the quarter-finals.

Under the guidance of Spanish coach Aritz López Garai, the team is eager to showcase their growth on the continental stage and aim for a more significant stage.

Mauritania earned their ticket to CHAN 2024 with a solid performance in the qualifying rounds. Drawn against Mali in the second round, Mauritania won 1-0 in Nouakchott before holding their opponents to a 0-0 draw in Bamako. This result secured their place in the finals and highlighted their defensive discipline and tactical maturity.

Midfielder El Hacen El Id brings a wealth of experience to Mauritania's squad. A seasoned professional, El Id previously played for Spanish clubs such as



Madagascar coach Romuald Rakotonrabre

Levante and Lugo, where he honed his skills.

At CHAN 2024, El Id's leadership and technical ability will be critical for Mauritania's ambitions. Known for his composure under pressure and vision on the pitch, the midfielder is expected to be the linchpin in López Garai's setup, dictating play and creating opportunities for his team.

CHAN 2024 marks Mauritania's fourth appearance in the tournament. The team made its debut in 2014 in South Africa and has shown steady improvement over the years.

### BURKINA FASO

The Stallions of Burkina Faso are set to make their fourth appearance in the Africa Nations

Championship after participating in 2014, 2018, and 2020 but have not progressed past the group stage.

Burkina Faso defeated Côte d'Ivoire in the last round of qualifications to dramatically earn their spot at CHAN 2024.

After a 2-2 aggregate draw Burkina Faso won 4-2 in penalty shootout after goals from Aboubacar Traoré and Alain Kanté tied the overall score.

To improve their tactics this year, they will draw on their tactical discipline and the knowledge they acquired from competing in the 2025 Mapinduzi Cup.

Their coach Issa Balboné, who was appointed head coach of Burkina Faso's CHAN and U23 teams in April 2024, has made an immediate impression. Balboné's tactical flexibility, had a crucial role in overcoming Côte d'Ivoire in the qualifiers.

He assists Brama Traoré for the senior national squad, which reflects his crucial contribution to the nation's football endeavours.

Watch out for Aboubacar Traoré, one of the main players in Burkina Faso's offence. The 26-year-old attacker plays for AS Sonabel. His ability to soar gives his game a new dimension and makes him a continual danger to opposing opponents.

### CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The Central African Republic (CAR) is set to make history with their maiden appearance at the CHAN. This monumental achievement has been celebrated

as one of the most exciting surprises of the 2024 tournament.

Under the guidance of coach Sébastien Ngato, the Bas-Oubangui Wild Beasts stunned Cameroon in the qualifiers, marking their entry into the African elite. After suffering a narrow 0-1 home defeat in the first leg in Abidjan, the team pulled off a remarkable 2-1 victory in Bafoussam, Cameroon, thanks to a late goal from Bertillon Arnold Yangana.

Yangana is one of the players to watch. He became a national hero after scoring the decisive goal against Cameroon in the qualifiers. Known for his speed and clinical finishing, he will be the focal point of CAR's attacking play in the tournament.

Coach Sébastien Ngato is a visionary tactician. Ngato has guided the Central African Republic to unprecedented heights. Known for his defensive solidity and effective counterattacking strategies, he employs a 4-3-3 formation tailored to the strengths of his players. With previous successes at the U20 level, Ngato's leadership has been instrumental in reshaping CAR's football narrative.

Despite their underdog status, CAR enters the CHAN tournament with momentum and confidence. Their upset against Cameroon demonstrates their ability to challenge more experienced teams. With a balanced mix of determination and strategic play, the Wild Beasts aim to make their debut a memorable one by progressing beyond the group stage.



Stallions of Burkina Faso



## 5th National Para-Badminton Open Championship: Team Abia Dominate

By Joseph Jacob & Ekebuisi Precious

**T**eam Abia emerged the overall winners of the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the National Para-Badminton Open Championship, which took place at the International Conference Centre, Umuahia with a total of 17 medals- five gold, five silver and seven bronze medals,

Abia State athletes were head and shoulders above their competitors as their closest rivals Plateau State finished second with a distant eight medals comprising of four gold, one silver and three bronze medals.

Ogun State finished third with a total of five medals-three gold, and two bronze medals.

Kwara, Imo and Rivers States finished fourth, fifth and sixth with four, nine and three medals respectively.

In his speech during the closing ceremony, the governor of Abia State Dr. Alex Otti emphasized that the event was not only a convergence of



Abia State Commissioner for Sports Sir Nwaobili Ananaba (standing right) with Senior Special Assistant to the Abia State Governor on Due Process, Dr. Oluobube Chukwu and some athletes and officials



talent, resilience and sportsmanship but also served as a reminder of the power of inclusivity, unity and determination.

The governor, who was represented by the Hon. Commissioner for Information Prince Okey Kalu appreciated the commissioner for sports and the local organizing committee, the state Badminton Association and the Badminton Federation of Nigeria for a successful outing and charged the athletes to see themselves as heroes.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobili Ananaba; the Chairman of the State Badminton Association, Abel Sunday; and the National Coordinator for Para-Badminton, Samuel Ekeoma, expressed gratitude to the Governor for his visionary investments and unwavering support for young talents in sports.

In their respective remarks, President of the Badminton

Federation of Nigeria, Francis Orbih, and Director of Para-Sports at the National Sports Commission, Thecla Opara, also commended Governor Otti for his commitment to developing para-sports and supporting athletes across Nigeria.

There were goodwill messages from various stakeholders including President of the Badminton Federation of Nigeria, Francis Orbih, and Director of Para-Sports at the National Sports Commission, Thecla Opara, also commended Governor Otti for his commitment to developing para-sports and supporting athletes across Nigeria.

In a similar development, the Senior Special Assistant to the Abia State Governor on Due Process, Dr. Oluobube Chukwu commended

Governor Alex Chioma Otti for his visionary leadership and unwavering support for inclusive sports development in the state.

He made this commendation during the closing ceremony of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Para-Badminton Open Championship,

"This tournament is not just a sporting event; it is a bold statement of the Governor's commitment to building a society where everyone, regardless of physical ability, is given the platform to thrive", Dr. Chukwu stated.

He praised the Governor's strategic investment in sports infrastructure and policy direction that has made Abia a hub for para-sports. According to him, the successful hosting of the 5th National

Para-Badminton Open proves that Abia is ready to welcome the international community as it prepares to host the dual Para-Badminton Championships in September 2025. "With the conducive environment, top-class facilities, and a government that prioritizes inclusivity, we are confident that Abia will deliver a

world-class event", he added. Dr. Chukwu also emphasized that beyond sports, the Governor's reforms across sectors including health, education, and social welfare have uplifted vulnerable groups and restored public confidence in governance.

Meanwhile, the 1st Abia Para-Badminton International Championship is scheduled for September 30 to October 5, 2025, to be followed by the All Africa Para-Badminton Championship from October 6 to 12, 2025.

### SUDOKU

Puzzle By: Prince Blessing Lazarus

	7		5	8	3		2	
	5	9	2			3		
3	4				6	5		7
7	9	5				6	3	2
		3	6	9	7	1		
6	8				2	7		
9	1	4	8	3	5		7	6
	3		7		1	4	9	5
5	6	7	4	2	9		1	3

All you have to do is fill the grid in such away that every 3X3 box and row and column, contains the numbers 1-9.

