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Mixed Reactions Trail Appointment Of Amupitan As New Inec Chairman

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru and Ikechukwu Chinaza

Reactions have continued to trail the appointment of Professor Joash Ojo Amupitan, SAN, as the new Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), with prominent Nigerians across political and civil society circles expressing mixed opinions on his emergence.

The appointment, officially approved by the National Council of State (NCS), following President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's recommendation, was confirmed during the Council's meeting recently at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

The meeting, presided over by President Tinubu, had in attendance former Presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Abdulsalami Abubakar, several state governors, and other statutory members.

Former presidential Spokesman, Ajuri Ngelale, described the appointment as a demonstration of the President's commitment to strengthening democratic institutions.

"The President was deliberate in choosing a man of character and competence. Professor Amupitan's legal background and reputation for integrity make him well-suited to lead INEC into a new era of reform and trust," Ngelale said.

Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, also lauded the choice, calling it "A strong signal of commitment to credible elections."

"Professor Amupitan's antecedents in legal scholarship and public ethics give Nigerians confidence that INEC will be guided by fairness, firmness, and transparency," he added.

However, the House of Representatives Minority Leader, Hon. Kingsley Chinda, urged the new INEC boss to guard the Commission's independence jealously.

"He must be above political pressure and ensure the sanctity of the ballot remains sacrosanct," Chinda stated.

The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), hailed the appointment as a step in the right direction, describing Professor Amupitan as a "tested professional with no partisan baggage."

In a statement signed by its National Publicity Secretary, Felix Morka, the party expressed confidence that the new chairman would "consolidate the gains of recent electoral reforms and deepen the culture of free and fair elections."

Conversely, the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP), called for vigilance, warning that INEC's credibility must not be compromised.

According to the PDP National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba:

"While we acknowledge his qualifications, Nigerians expect him to resist executive influence and ensure that INEC operates as a truly independent institution."

The Labour Party (LP), also welcomed the appointment but charged Amupitan to "prioritize electoral credibility and voter confidence."

Civil society groups and election observers have also shared their expectations.

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), in a statement by its Chairperson, Auwal Rafsanjani, commended the appointment but urged the new INEC chairman to "clean up INEC's internal processes, improve staff discipline, and enhance logistics."

YIAGA Africa's Executive Director, Samson Itodo, said the appointment presents "an opportunity to rebuild trust in the electoral system."

"INEC's next phase will test his leadership. Nigerians want transparency, accountability, and a clear plan for electoral technology and security," Itodo remarked.



Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti (left), and Enugu State Governor, Dr. Peter Mba (Right), during Gov. Otti's recent courtesy visit to the Enugu State Government House

Falana Lauds Gov Otti's Development Strides

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Human Rights Lawyer and Senior Advocate of Nigeria, (SAN), Femi Falana, has called on the Federal Government to ensure greater access to justice for ordinary citizens, noting that the country's judicial system currently serves mainly the elite.

Falana, made the call recently in Nvosi, Isiala Ngwa South LGA of Abia State, while speaking with journalists shortly after a closed-door meeting with Governor Alex Otti.

He criticised the notion that the judiciary is the last hope of the common man, insisting that "the common man has no means to go to court."

"Access to justice by the people, that is what the judicial system needs. Right now we have a lot of access to justice by politicians. Only their cases move in court because political cases are time-bound."

"Other cases for me must be time-bound. People make the mistake of saying the judiciary is

... urges FG to Ensure Judicial Access For All

the last hope of the common man. The common man has no means to go to court.

"The judiciary is the last hope of the elite, the bourgeoisie", Falana said.

The human rights lawyer, therefore, urged governments at all levels, to promote alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, which he described as rooted in African traditions.

Falana, who cited the example of a South-South state

where palace law reports exist, stressed the need to strengthen customary courts and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.

"If you want the ordinary people to benefit from the judicial system, you must promote alternative dispute resolution."

"The majority of our people do not go to Western courts, they patronise traditional rulers and community leaders to solve problems."

"So the governments of our country, including that of Abia State, must also reform the customary courts, palaces of traditional rulers where our people access daily to resolve their disputes."

"What they now call alternative dispute resolution is actually African dispute resolution. Before the colonialists came, our people had nothing to do with adjudication."

Appointments, Strictly Based On Merit Says Governor Otti

The Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, OFR, has reaffirmed that appointments in his administration are strictly based on merit and proven track records, not on favoritism or apprenticeship.

Governor Otti made this

known recently, during the 60th birthday celebration of the Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobilor Nwadianna Ananaba, held in Umuahia.

"This is a government that relies on track record. Some people think government is a place for apprenticeship or where you

learn on the job. Not in our government. If you don't know the work, you can't be here," Otti stated.

He explained that appointments under his administration are made based on competence and capacity to deliver, stressing that such positions should not be viewed as favours.

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EDITORIAL: Autism, Pregnancy And The Imperative Of Safe Drug Use

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Mixed Reactions Trail Appointment Of Amupitan As New Inec Chairman

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Similarly, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), noted that "Amupitan's success will depend on his openness to reforms, collaboration with stakeholders, and respect for public scrutiny."

However, a legal practitioner, Sir Ifeanyi Ejiofor (KSC), has expressed deep concern over the recent appointment of Prof. Joash Ojo Amupitan, as Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), describing it as a potential threat to the neutrality and integrity of Nigeria's electoral process.

In a commentary titled "When the Umpire Was Once on the Pitch - The Curious Case of Prof. Amupitan as INEC Chairman," Ejiofor questioned the moral and constitutional implications of appointing someone allegedly linked to partisan political activities to head an institution that serves as the guardian of electoral fairness.

Ejiofor argued that while the 1999 Constitution empowers the President to appoint the INEC Chairman subject to Senate confirmation, the office demands more than procedural legitimacy—it requires unquestionable integrity and apolitical standing. He noted that public speculations linking Prof. Amupitan to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's legal team during the 2023 election tribunal, if true, present serious ethical challenges including conflict of interest, appearance of bias, and the establishment of a dangerous precedent that could erode public trust in the electoral system. "An umpire must never have worn the jersey of any team," he emphasised, warning that even the perception of partisanship could undermine confidence in future elections.

The lawyer further called on the Senate to exercise due diligence and prioritize national interest over political expediency during the confirmation process.

He cautioned that confirming the appointment without rigorous scrutiny would blur the line between politics and impartiality, thereby jeopardizing the independence of INEC and the credibility of Nigeria's democracy. Ejiofor maintained by urging lawmakers to ensure that "conscience still finds a seat in the Red Chamber," as the integrity of the ballot box remains the soul of democratic governance.

Professor Amupitan's appointment was ratified after due consideration by the National Council of State, marking the beginning of what many see as a reform era for the electoral body.

A Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) and Professor of Law at the University of Jos, Amupitan hails from Kogi State and is renowned for his scholarship in constitutional law, governance, and human rights.

He has served as Dean of the Faculty of Law, Chairman of the Committee on Legal Reforms, and Consultant to the National Assembly on legislative drafting.

Known for his forthright views on constitutionalism and democratic accountability, Professor Amupitan has consistently advocated for transparency and the adoption of technology in elections.

As preparations intensify for the 2027 general elections, expectations are high that the new INEC Chairman will strengthen institutional independence, address logistical lapses, and ensure full implementation of electronic result transmission.

Observers said, his first major task will be to unveil an internal reform blueprint focused on staff integrity, voter data security, and effective logistics management.

With his academic rigor, legal authority, and reform-minded disposition, many Nigerians believe Professor Amupitan's tenure could mark a decisive step towards restoring public trust in Nigeria's electoral process.

Appointments Strictly Based On Merit

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"When we make appointments, it's not a favour. We assign responsibilities to people who can deliver. If you merit it, you'll get the position; if you don't, no matter who you are, you won't," the Governor emphasised.

Describing members of his cabinet as accomplished professionals, Otti reiterated that the "New Abia Standard" is built on merit, accountability, and performance. He commended Sir Ananaba for his contributions to youth and sports development in the state, noting that "the reward for good work is more work."

"Thank you for the great job you have done prior to this time, which gave you the opportunity to even be considered in the first place," he added, while praying for the celebrant's continued health and long life.

In his remarks, Sir Ananaba expressed gratitude to the governor for his presence and for giving him the opportunity to serve in the transformative administration that has "changed the ugly narratives in Abia State."

The event was graced by top government officials, including the Speaker of the Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Emmanuel Emeruwa; the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Austin Okezie Nmerigini; Secretary to the State Government, Prof. Kenechi Kalu; Head of Service, Mr. Benson Ojeikere; commissioners, local government mayors, led by ALGON Chairman and Mayor of Isuikwuato, Hon. Chinedu Ekeke, among others.

Highlights of the event included goodwill messages, testimonies, and the cutting of the birthday cake.

MTN Empowers 50 Indigent Abia Women

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

Fifty indigent women from Abia State have been trained and empowered to start their own businesses, by telecom giant, MTN Nigeria, through its Mobile Money initiative, MTN MoMo Agent.

The training and empowerment programme was launched recently, at the Banquet Hall of the Abia State Government.

Speaking at the event, the wife of the Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, represented by the Managing Director of the Abia State Signage and Advertising Agency, Mrs. Victoria Onwubiko,



Wife of the Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti

commended the collaboration between the state government and MTN Nigeria.

She urged the beneficiaries to seize the opportunity to grow and sustain their businesses.

MTN's Sales and Development Representative,

McDaniel Enweremadu, highlighted that the partnership aims to foster financial inclusion, especially for women in rural areas, by simplifying business operations and digital transactions.

The Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Women Affairs, Mrs. Chinenye Nwaka, applauded the initiative and reiterated the First Lady's commitment to supporting women in becoming financially independent.

She praised MTN Nigeria for its role in driving economic empowerment and improving the lives of women across the state.

Police Rescue 18 Stolen Children, Arrest 10 Suspects In Child Trafficking Syndicate

By Ikechukwu Chinaza

The Abia State Police Command has rescued 18 children, including 8, infants, and arrested 10 suspects for their alleged involvement in a child-stealing and trafficking syndicate operating within Abia and its environs.

According to a statement issued on Friday, October 10, 2025, by the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Maureen Chinaka, the operation followed a distress report and subsequent intelligence-led raids on suspected hideouts in Aba.

The case began on September 27, 2025, when a young woman from Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, reported to Ohuru Isimiri Police Division that her two children had been stolen by a man who lured her to Aba under the pretext of marriage.

Acting on credible intelligence, police operatives on October 8 stormed a residence in Aba where five suspects identified as Mrs. Best Ndubusi (41), Charles Enyinnaya (25), Eunice Ezekiel (35), Nnena Kalu (60), and Gideon Esther (25)—were arrested. One

infant and seven children were rescued during the operation.

Further investigations led to another successful raid on October 9, along Aba/Owerri Road, where four more suspects—Obiegbonam Von (65), Ezeoma Rejoice (21), Ngozi Owoh (20), and Favour Ernest (22) were apprehended. Officers rescued an additional seven infants and three children.

On October 10, the police arrested another

suspect, Brittney Oyemuwa Zion (22), leading to the recovery of one more child. All rescued victims are currently in safe custody, while investigations continue at the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Umuahia.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Danladi Isa, commended the officers for their swift action and reaffirmed the Command's commitment

to eradicating child trafficking and other forms of criminality in the state. He urged parents and guardians to remain vigilant, and to promptly report suspicious activities to the nearest police station. Members of the public searching for missing children are advised to contact the Gender Section of the SCID or call 08033173846.

Addition of Name and Date of Birth

This is to affirm that Okike Dorothy which was written on my National Identification Number (NIN) and Okike Dorothy Chioma are same person. I now wish to be known and addressed as Okike Dorothy Chiome and my date of birth was wrongly captured as 1st January 1982 instead of 29th May, 1982. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. General public should please take note.

OKIKE DORATHY CHIOMA

29TH MAY, 1982.

Addition of Name

This is to affirm that Kene Chikaodi which appeared in my Bank Verification Number (BVN) and Kene Chikaodi Theresa is the same person. I now wish to be known and addressed as KENE CHIKAODI THERESA. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. Stanbic IBTC Bank and the general public should please take note.

KENE CHIKAODI THERESA.



Commissioner of Police, CP Danladi Isa

News

ASHTF Arrests Fake Revenue Agents Over Extortion In Aba

From Chinedu Kelechi Aba,

The Abia State Harmonized Taskforce (ASHTF), has arrested four individuals for allegedly impersonating members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) and extorting money from residents in Aba.

The suspects were apprehended recently, at the Flyover Junction in the Ugwunagbo area during an operation authorized by the Aba area coordinator of the Taskforce, Mr. Uche Wogu.

In a statement issued by the Taskforce spokesperson, Mr. Miracle Chukwunye, the agency said the arrests followed multiple complaints from traders, market women, and tricycle operators about a syndicate that had been harassing and extorting them along the Port Harcourt Road axis.

"Upon arrival, the Taskforce, in a joint operation with the police, arrested Mr. Ahuama and three accomplices who were caught extorting money from unsuspecting traders and tricycle operators under the false pretence of being NURTW officials," Chukwunye said.

He disclosed that the suspects had earlier impounded about 20 tricycles that morning and collected illegal levies from the owners before being intercepted.

According to the spokesperson, the suspects resisted arrest and attacked Taskforce and police officers but were eventually subdued and taken into custody.

Chukwunye reminded residents that Abia State operates a "No Cash-at-Hand" revenue policy, warning that no government-authorized official is permitted to collect cash directly from citizens.

"We urge traders, transporters, and residents to report any unauthorized revenue collector to the authorities," he said.

The Taskforce reiterated its commitment to eliminating illegal revenue collection and ensuring that legitimate government taxes and levies are paid through the approved digital channels.

NDDC Emphasises Reputation Management, Stakeholder Collaboration for National Development

From Aligwe Stella,

The Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Dr. Samuel Ogbuku, has stressed that effective stakeholder engagement and sound reputation management are crucial to sustaining public trust and achieving national development goals.

Ogbuku stated this at the opening ceremony of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Rivers State Public Relations Week, held in Port Harcourt. He was represented by the NDDC Director of Corporate Affairs, Mrs. Seledi Thompson-Wakama.

According to him, engaging stakeholders at the field level fosters partnerships, prevents duplication of efforts, and ensures progress toward the Niger Delta's development objectives.

"We realize that it is crucial to build trust with all partners to get their buy-in and win their confidence. In this respect, we have established processes to entrench a new institutional culture anchored on sound ethics and corporate governance," Ogbuku said.

He disclosed that the NDDC is working with global consultancy firm KPMG to strengthen its corporate governance framework, introducing measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to enhance accountability and transparency.

Ogbuku noted that the initiative aligns with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration's policy of inclusive development and prioritizing stakeholder participation in governance.

The NDDC boss commended the theme of the NIPR Week "Refocusing Stakeholder Engagement and Public Trust in a Challenging Economy", describing it as timely and reflective of current national realities.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the NIPR Rivers State Chapter, Rev. Francis Asuk, emphasised that peacebuilding and good governance depend on strategic communication.

He lamented the growing erosion of public trust, noting that misinformation and economic challenges have strained institutions and communities.

"The time has come for our leaders, both in government and the private sector, to engage professional public relations practitioners in managing and communicating through sensitive issues," Asuk said.

He added that the expertise of PR professionals in stakeholder mapping, perception management, conflict resolution, and narrative framing could play a vital role in restoring public confidence and fostering stability.

Asuk urged institutions to adopt transparent communication and strategic engagement to rebuild public trust and drive sustainable development across the Niger Delta and beyond.

FG Reaffirms Commitment To Digital Sovereignty Educational Transformation

From Sophina Ovuikwe

The Minister of Education, Dr. Maruf Tunji Alausa, CON, has officially declared open the third edition of MoodleMoot Africa 2025, calling on African nations to take ownership of their digital educational future.

The landmark event, hosted by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in partnership with the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the Moodle Association of Africa, is holding for the first time outside South Africa.

The Abuja conference convened educators, policymakers, and technology experts under the theme: "Leveraging the Power of

Disruptive Technologies for Africa's Educational Transformation."

Dr. Alausa described MoodleMoot as a defining moment for Africa's digital sovereignty. He, however, urged stakeholders to "move from dialogue to scalable action" and to ensure Africa becomes a technology innovator, not just an adopter.

Reaffirming the Federal Government's commitment, the Minister cited the ICT in Education Policy (2019), the Science and Technology Education Policy (2020), and the Open Educational

Resources Policy (2024), all of which align with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

He further acknowledged the contributions of key agencies, including the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), and the National Universities Commission (NUC), in strengthening the nation's digital infrastructure.

In his remarks, NOUN Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Olufemi Peters, described MoodleMoot as a "unifying

movement for African education." Messages of solidarity were also delivered by Ms. Lindy Minele of South Africa and Mr. Luxolo Rubushe of ADAPT-IT, who commended Nigeria's leadership in advancing open and inclusive digital learning.

The three-day conference will feature over 90 research papers, eight panel discussions, and cutting-edge innovation showcases on artificial intelligence, the Metaverse, cybersecurity, and education policy frameworks. Proceedings will conclude with a Gala Night themed "Celebrating Africa's Digital Future."



Governor Alex Otti

Gov. Otti Pledges Govt's Support To Back The Hero's Past Charity Organization

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State has pledged government's support and partnership with the Back To The Hero's Past Charity Organisation (BATHEP), in the establishment of a proposed N5 billion Geriatrics Village Project, spearheaded by his Special Adviser on Policies and Interventions, Rev. Fr. Christian Anokwuru.

The governor made the commitment during the public presentation of Fr. Anokwuru's new 554-page book, "Nature and Nurture: Beyond My Autobiography, Vol. 1," and the official unveiling of the Geriatrics Village initiative held at the JAAC Building, Umuahia, recently.

Governor Otti described the proposed village as a "family-friendly environment" designed to provide dignified living, companionship, and specialized healthcare for elderly citizens.

He assured that the state government would not allow Fr. Anokwuru to embark on the massive project alone.

"I don't think, as a government, we should sit by and watch him do this alone". So, I am looking at a partnership whereby the government will engage with him and partly own and support it financially," Gov Otti stated.

The governor immediately directed the Commissioner for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Mrs. Ngozi Blessing Felix, to liaise with Fr. Anokwuru and present a workable partnership framework for government involvement.

Otti commended Fr. Anokwuru for his foresight, compassion, and intellectual courage, describing the cleric's commitment to the welfare of the elderly as "a true demonstration of faith in action."

He also praised the author for his literary achievement, revealing that the priest's resilience had inspired him to revive his own unfinished book project.

"With people like Father Anokwuru, I've now been encouraged to go back and look at it," Otti said.

Speaking at the event, Chairman of BATHEP, Prof. Charles

Chilekezi, explained that the proposed Geriatrics Village – to be sited at Amuzu Ubakala, comprising residential housing, hospital, physiotherapy and recreation centres, and professional training for caregivers.

He said the project aims to ensure that the elderly, "live with dignity, not just survive in hospitals," adding that the facility will pursue self-sustainability through large-scale agricultural ventures cultivating crops like cassava, melon, and yam to support its operations and the less-privileged.

Prof. Chilekezi assured donors that all contributions to the foundation would be used judiciously to create maximum social impact.

In his address, Rev. Fr. Anokwuru said the Geriatrics Village is not merely a retirement home but a comprehensive institution that will train professional caregivers and provide medical and social support for senior citizens.

He expressed gratitude to Governor Otti for his encouragement and leadership, noting that his association with the governor had "deepened his belief in purposeful governance."

Fr. Anokwuru, however, criticised what he described as the "desperate acts of opposition elements", who, under the guise of demanding accountability, were attempting to undermine the government's progress.

A non-agenarian, Chief John Nwankwo, also spoke at the event, commending the initiative as "a dream come true", for elderly citizens and praising Governor Otti for his people-centred leadership.

The ceremony, co-chaired by the member representing Isialangwa North and South Federal Constituency, attracted dignitaries, including former Minister of State for Mines and Steel Development, Chief Uche Ogah, religious leaders, scholars, and members of the Abia political class.

News

Gov Otti Reaffirms Commitment To Universal Eye Care As Abia Marks World Sight Day

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to ensuring universal access to quality eye care services across the state.

Governor Otti stated this in Umuahia, at a symposium organised by the Abia Health Eye Management Bureau to commemorate the 2025 World Sight Day themed, "Love Your Eyes, Vision for All".

The Governor, represented by the commissioner for Health, Prof Enoch Uche, described the theme as a call to action for individuals, communities, and institutions to prioritise eye health as a vital component of general well-being.

He noted that his administration prioritises health care and welfare of Abians which is evidence in the reforms in the sector, ranging from infrastructural rejuvenation to human resource upgrade, and As well as improvement in the remuneration package for healthcare workers.

He noted that his administration places high premium on the healthcare and welfare of Abians, as evidenced in reforms in the sector such as infrastructural renewal, human resource development and improved remuneration of healthcare workers.

Governor Otti outlined preventive measures such as regular eye check-ups, reduced screen exposure, and prompt professional attention for any visual changes and cautioned against patronising unlicensed practitioners and using unverified herbal remedies.

The Governor further warned media organisations against promoting unverified medical products, saying the Ministry of Health would act decisively against misinformation.

He therefore urged traditional rulers and community leaders to intensify awareness campaigns and monitor health-related activities within their localities.

In her remarks, the Administrator of the Abia Health Eye Management Bureau, Dr Betty Emeka-Obasi, reaffirmed the State Government's determination to eliminate avoidable blindness and expand access to affordable eye care.

She highlighted the achievements recorded since the Bureau's establishment by executive order in July 2024.

"Since inception, we've screened over 15,000 people, provided 11,000 free screenings, and conducted 2,000 life-changing eye surgeries. Our vision is clear: no one in Abia should suffer from preventable blindness", she stated.

Dr Emeka-Obasi disclosed that the Bureau had upgraded the State Specialist Hospital Eye Centre and established integrated vision centres in ten primary healthcare facilities, with four currently operational.

She announced the introduction of the School Eye Health Programme, under which 190 teachers have been trained to identify early signs of eye conditions in schoolchildren.

Dr Emeka-Obasi expressed concern over widespread quackery and harmful eye practices, especially in rural areas, warning that the prevalence of preventable blindness in the state had risen above the national average.

In a keynote address, Professor Emmanuel Esenwah called for greater collaboration among individuals, organisations, and governments to tackle preventable blindness and vision impairment.

Prof Esenwah, noted that the lack of accessible eye care services in low-income areas often forces people to rely on self-medication and traditional remedies, which can worsen eye conditions and lead to permanent vision.

He commended the Abia State Government for establishing vision centres in primary healthcare facilities, describing the initiative as a major step towards universal health coverage and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 3.

A Consultant Ophthalmologist, Dr Chioma Uchendu, cautioned against using substances such as breast milk or urine to treat eye problems, describing such practices as dangerous and capable of causing blindness.

She advised adults aged 40 and above to undergo annual eye examinations, explaining that some conditions like diabetic retinopathy may progress silently without symptoms.

Also speaking, the Head of the Optometry Department at Gregory University, Dr Obior Osiogwe, emphasised the role of nutrition in maintaining eye health and encouraged the inclusion of Vitamin A rich foods such as palm oil and omega-rich fish in daily diets.

The Director of Public Health and Disease Control in the Ministry of Health, Dr Princess Orijei, reiterated the state's commitment to public education, community outreach, and strong advocacy against quackery in eye care.

The event featured a symposium, drama presentation, free eye screenings, and distribution of reading glasses and eye drops.

MOU AU Trains Abia Youths On Tomato/Pepper Production

By Ikechukwu Chinaza

The Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOU AU), in collaboration with the Science and Technical Committee of the Nigerian Institute of Food Science and Technology (NIFST) and the Hope for Farmers Women and Girls Initiative (HOFWGI), has launched the Cohort 1.0 Youth Empowerment and Agricultural Skills Training. The practical initiative is designed to equip young people from the university's host communities and beyond with hands-on skills in tomato and pepper cultivation as well as value addition through processing.

Declaring the training open, the Sixth Vice-Chancellor of the University, Prof. Maduebibi Ofo Iwe, said the initiative reflects the university's strong commitment to community development, food security, and youth empowerment.

Represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Prof. Nneoma Elechi Obasi, the Vice-Chancellor explained that 23 youths were selected for the first phase of the training, which focuses on the entire process of tomato and pepper cultivation – from nursery establishment to harvesting.

"We are empowering Abia youths through this initiative. Our goal is to first train young people from four university host communities – Umudike, Umudike Ukwu, Okwu Olokoro Autonomous Community, and Umuopara Ozara Olokoro Autonomous Community," Prof. Obasi stated.

She described the programme as a hands-on training designed to engage participants practically and help them become productive entrepreneurs.

"In addition to farm-based instruction, participants are receiving laboratory training on processing techniques to extract and produce tomato-based products such as juice, purée, ketchup, drinks, and tomato powder.

"We are empowering them to make good use of their time and become useful to themselves and their communities. This training can spark something in them that will inspire future entrepreneurship," she



Prof. Maduebibi Ofo Iwe.

emphasized.

She further revealed that the initiative adopts a 'Train-the-Trainer' model, under which four participants were selected from each community. Those trained will, in turn, extend the knowledge to other youths in their localities, thereby expanding the programme's impact.

Earlier in her remarks, the Director of the Centre for Gender, Youth and Child Development, Prof. Mabel Ifeoma Onwuka, described the project as a long-term empowerment drive aimed at giving back to society while promoting agricultural innovation.

"We are here to empower the youths, starting from our university host community. We are doing it in phases, and the essence is to give back to society," she noted.

Prof. Onwuka who is also the Supervisor MOU AU Greenhouse Project on Tomatoes and Peppers Production, further explained that the training also equips participants with starter kits comprising seeds, manure, and other necessary materials to help them establish their farms after the programme.

"We will keep track of their progress and provide follow-up support to ensure sustainability," she said.

She added that the programme, implemented by the Centre for Gender, Youth and Child Development in collaboration with the Hope for Farmers Women and Girls Initiative (HOFWGI) and the Department of Food Science and Technology, will be sustained and expanded to accommodate more participants in future cohorts.

"After this cohort, the next batch will also be trained to expand knowledge, improve livelihoods, and ensure food and nutritional security in Nigeria," she assured.

Onwuka emphasized that beyond food production, the initiative seeks to foster peace and stability within local communities by meaningfully engaging youths in productive ventures, thereby reducing restiveness and unemployment.

They also appealed to Governors in the South-East and South-South regions and other tiers of government to prioritize food security by investing in youth-driven agricultural programmes.

"Governments should take advantage of the strength and creativity of our youths to boost agriculture and ensure food sufficiency," Prof. Onwuka urged.

She stressed that greater investment in irrigation and modern farming techniques would enable all-year-round cultivation of key crops, thereby boosting food availability and rural livelihoods.

The Agriculturist described the programme as part of MOU AU's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and reaffirmed that it aligns with the university's broader mission to use agricultural knowledge for sustainable community transformation and national food security.

"This is an extension of knowledge – our contribution to society. We want to ensure that every household has enough food, adequate nutrition, and the purchasing power to sustain

it. If this training is practiced, it will positively impact both the micro and macro economy," she stated.

The Professor of Soil Science who trained the youths from Cultivation to harvesting stages of tomatoes and peppers, encouraged the participants to maintain close contact with the university for continuous mentorship and support.

"The university doors are open. The trainees are free to come in for further clarifications and free consultations as they implement what they have learned," Prof. Onwuka noted.

The Cohort 1.0 Youth Empowerment Programme represents a vital step in MOU AU's ongoing efforts to promote agricultural innovation, enhance youth self-reliance, and strengthen Nigeria's food and nutritional security.

Prof. Onwuka also demonstrated the production and use of biochar as a sustainable and affordable fertilizer to improve soil fertility and boost tomato and pepper production in Southeast Nigeria. She described biochar as an eco-friendly product made from agricultural waste such as crop residues, rice husks, and animal dung through a controlled heating process known as pyrolysis.

Explaining during a demonstration session with youths, Prof. Onwuka explained that applying biochar to the region's degraded and acidic soils helps increase crop yield, enhance nutrient availability, and improve soil structure. She added that biochar enriches the soil with essential nutrients like phosphorus, calcium, and potassium while supporting beneficial microorganisms.

According to her, biochar offers farmers a low-cost alternative to chemical fertilizers, making it ideal for smallholder farmers cultivating tomatoes and peppers. She emphasized that the technology not only recycles agricultural waste into valuable farm inputs but also helps mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions during production.

She also commended Mrs. Kasie Okakpu from the Department of Food Science and Technology, who showcased various local food products such as Monkey Kola and demonstrated juice extraction from indigenous crops.

Editorial

Autism, Pregnancy And The Imperative Of Safe Drug Use

Across the world, conversations around autism and possible environmental or medical contributors are intensifying. In recent years, studies have examined a potential link between the use of acetaminophen—widely known in Nigeria by the brand name Tylenol or paracetamol—during pregnancy and the risk of autism or other neurodevelopmental disorders in children. While no study has established a proven causal link, the growing body of research has raised important public-health questions that Nigerians cannot afford to ignore.

Several large-scale studies from Europe and the United States have suggested a possible association between prenatal acetaminophen use and a slightly increased risk of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children. However, these are observational studies, meaning they can identify correlations but not necessarily prove cause and effect.

More rigorous analyses—especially those comparing siblings, where one pregnancy involved acetaminophen use and another did not—tend to show no significant difference in autism risk. This suggests that other factors, such as genetics or shared environmental conditions, may be responsible for the apparent association.

Expert reviews and global health authorities, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), all agree on one thing: the evidence remains inconclusive and does not prove that acetaminophen causes autism. Nevertheless, they urge cautious and responsible use—especially during pregnancy.

In response to accumulating research, the FDA has started reviewing labeling for acetaminophen products to include mention of studies suggesting possible neurodevelopmental effects. However, the agency and most professional bodies still maintain that acetaminophen remains the safest pain and fever medication for pregnant women when used correctly.

For Nigerians, this conversation is both timely and necessary. Acetaminophen is among the most commonly used medications in the country, available over-the-counter and often used casually for headaches, fever, and general pain relief. Pregnant women, in particular,

frequently rely on it because it is considered mild and safe compared to stronger painkillers. Unfortunately, self-medication and overdose are common, and few are aware that excessive or prolonged use—even of “simple” paracetamol—can pose risks to both mother and child.

Autism is not caused by a single factor. Genetics, environmental exposures, infections, and pregnancy-related complications all play roles that scientists are still working to understand. However, awareness about modifiable risks—those we can reduce through education and better choices—is essential.

In Nigeria, autism remains poorly understood, often stigmatized, and rarely diagnosed early. Many families struggle in silence, mistaking developmental delays for stubbornness or spiritual problems. The country urgently needs broader education about early detection, intervention, and possible preventive measures.

Sensitizing expectant mothers, families, and healthcare workers about the safe use of medications during pregnancy could contribute meaningfully to long-term prevention efforts. Women should not stop taking acetaminophen abruptly or without medical guidance, but they should know the right questions to ask:

What does is safe

Are there non-drug options for managing pain or fever?

Health authorities, professional associations, and media organizations in Nigeria should begin structured campaigns to educate the public on safe medication use during pregnancy. Pharmacists and community health workers must also play a stronger role in counselling patients and discouraging self-prescription.

At the same time, we urge government agencies and researchers should invest in local studies to understand how factors unique to Nigeria—such as malnutrition, poor access to healthcare, or environmental toxins—interact with medications and child development outcomes. Without local data, Nigeria risks relying solely on foreign findings that may not reflect our realities.

Reducing the future burden of autism and related developmental disorders requires a multi-pronged approach: promoting maternal health, encouraging safe drug practices, reducing stigma, and improving early childhood care. Pregnant women should continue to follow medical advice, using acetaminophen only when necessary, at the lowest effective dose, and for the shortest possible duration.

Autism awareness in Nigeria must shift from fear to informed action. Science does not yet prove that acetaminophen causes autism—but the debate underscores a larger truth: that every medication, under the most common, deserves respect and proper guidance. Sensitization today can help secure a healthier, more informed generation tomorrow.

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

Bridging The Education And Skill Gap Among Nigerian Youths

Dear Editor,

Sir, I humbly write to draw attention to one of the most pressing crises confronting Nigeria today—the menace of poor education and widening skill gaps among our youths. This problem has become a major stumbling block to national development, and unless addressed urgently and systemically, the country risks losing an entire generation of talented young people to unemployment, poverty, and hopelessness.

For decades, education has been touted as the bedrock of national growth. Yet in Nigeria, it appears to have lost both its direction and relevance. The gap between what is taught in schools and what the modern world demands continues to grow wider by the day. Our curriculum, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels, is largely outdated and disconnected from the needs of a 21st-century economy driven by technology, innovation, and practical skills.

Each year, thousands of Nigerian graduates flood the labour market, but most lack employable skills. Employers constantly lament that graduates are not “industry-ready.” This situation has left many young people disillusioned, while others are driven into cybercrime, political thuggery, and irregular migration in search of better prospects abroad. The so-called Japa syndrome is not just a quest for greener pastures—it is an indictment of a system that has failed to equip its youth with the tools to thrive at home.

The causes of this educational decline are multi-layered. Chronic underfunding, decaying infrastructure, incessant industrial strikes, and neglect of vocational and technical training have all contributed to the rot. Furthermore, the disconnect between academia and industry means that learning is mostly theoretical, with little practical exposure. In the digital age, a student who cannot code, analyze data, or solve real-life problems is at a severe disadvantage globally.

To reverse this trend, Nigeria must embrace a systemic reform—one that redefines education as a driver of innovation and productivity rather than mere certification. The government must prioritize education funding, not as charity but as an investment in national survival. Curricula at all levels should be reviewed to integrate digital literacy, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, and creative thinking.

Equally important is the revival of vocational and technical education. Not every youth needs a university degree; some need skills that can immediately translate into value creation—carpentry, fashion design, coding, renewable energy installation, agriculture, and robotics, among others. Such skills will empower young Nigerians to compete globally while contributing locally.

Private sector participation is also key. Industries must partner with schools to provide internships, mentorship programs, and practical exposure. This collaboration can bridge the divide between theory and practice, ensuring that graduates are ready for the modern workplace.

Moreover, the government must expand digital access by investing in ICT infrastructure and affordable internet connectivity, especially in rural areas. In today's world, access to information is access to opportunity.

Finally, there must be a national reorientation that restores the dignity of labour and values innovation over shortcuts. Our youth must be encouraged to dream, create, and compete—not just survive.

If Nigeria is serious about development, then education reform must be treated as a matter of national emergency. A country that neglects its youths neglects its future.

Discourse

Tinubu's Mercy Doctrine and the Imperative of National Inclusion

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

When President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, granted presidential pardon to a host of historic national figures — including the revered Nigerian nationalist Herbert Macaulay, the Ogoni Nine, and Major-General Mamman Vatsa — the move was widely hailed as a bold stride toward reconciliation, restorative justice, and national unity.

The gesture, which also saw 82 inmates across the country regain their freedom and 959 citizens and foreigners receive national honours, reaffirmed Tinubu's stated commitment to healing old wounds and building a more inclusive Nigeria.

For many, it was not just an act of statecraft — it was a signal of compassion, courage, and the political maturity to confront Nigeria's painful past with empathy.

The posthumous pardon of the Ogoni Nine — executed three decades ago under General Sani Abacha's regime — struck a deep emotional chord across the nation.

It symbolized a long-overdue reconciliation with a chapter of injustice that haunted Nigeria's conscience for years.

Similarly, the clemency granted to several inmates and public figures reflected the President's belief in rehabilitation, forgiveness, and second chances — qualities that define great leaders who seek unity above vengeance.

If these gestures represent a move toward national healing, then the next logical step, many argue, is to extend that same olive branch to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the detained leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

Mazi Nnamdi Kanu has been in detention for several years, facing treason-related charges stemming from his agitation for self-determination in the South-East. His prolonged detention has become both a legal and political dilemma, one that continues to test Nigeria's unity and the government's approach to dissent.

While the courts continue to deliberate on his case, the broader question remains: Can there be true national reconciliation when one of the most symbolic figures of ethnic agitation remains behind bars?

Extending clemency to Kanu, as part of a carefully structured peace and reconciliation process, would not only demonstrate President Tinubu's magnanimity but also reaffirm his administration's commitment to dialogue, inclusiveness, and long-term stability.

The South-East, like other regions, yearns for justice, recognition, and belonging. A presidential pardon for Kanu could serve as a bridge of trust, rekindling faith in the federal system and showing that the government is willing to forgive in the interest of peace.

It would also align with the spirit behind the pardons granted to the Ogoni Nine and other historical figures — men

once condemned for their convictions but later vindicated by history.

By freeing Kanu, President Tinubu could set the stage for a broader conversation on national cohesion, equity, and the restructuring of Nigeria's political dialogue — a conversation that must be had if the nation is to truly move forward.

Leadership is not only measured by the firmness of justice but also by the grace of mercy. History often remembers leaders not for how harshly they punished, but for how bravely they forgave. Tinubu's bold use of the prerogative

Preside of mercy shows that he understands this truth. Extending it further to Mazi Nnamdi Kanu could mark the beginning of a new chapter in Nigeria's democratic journey — one defined not by retribution, but by reconciliation.

As Nigeria reflects on the symbolism of recent pardons, the question lingers:

Will President Tinubu complete this circle of healing by granting clemency to Nnamdi Kanu, thereby turning a page that has divided the nation for far too long?

If he does, it will not just be a political act — it will be a historic gesture of unity, one that could echo across generations.

News

OWSD Tasks Members On Effective Grantsmanship

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru and
Ikechukwu Chinaza

The Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD), Umudike Branch, has urged its members to embrace persistence, teamwork, mentorship, and excellence in their pursuit of research funding. This call was made during a grantsmanship workshop held recently at the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike, Abia State. The workshop was part of the organization's continued efforts to enhance women's participation in scientific innovation and national development.

Declaring the workshop open, the Coordinator of the OWSD Umudike branch, Prof. Mabel Ifeoma Onwuka, encouraged members not to give up on their ambitions but to "always give their dreams a second chance." She described the group's members as independent-minded, innovative, and self-driven women who have made leadership both fulfilling and rewarding.

Prof. Onwuka commended the executives and members for their unwavering support. She attributed the branch's success during her tenure to teamwork and collective effort, noting that several milestones were achieved through unity and dedication.

In her valedictory speech, Prof. Onwuka expressed pride in the resilience and accomplishments of the Umudike



The Coordinator of the OWSD Umudike Branch, Prof. Mabel Ifeoma Onwuka (middle), flanked to her immediate left by the Guest Speaker, Dr. Charles Nkwoala, and other participants during the group's recent workshop in Umudike, Abia State.

branch, emphasizing that the group's growth is a testament to the commitment of its members. She announced that the branch elections will hold on Thursday, October 30, 2025, while the 7th OWSD General Assembly is scheduled for November 3-7, 2025, in Bogotá, Colombia.

She urged members to take advantage of the upcoming international conference for professional growth and networking, adding that "science is our voice, and excellence must be our brand."

Delivering the keynote lecture entitled; "Effective Grantsmanship: Strategies for Developing and Writing Competitive Research Grant Proposals," a Community Nutritionist, Dr. Charles

Chiaka Nkwoala stressed the need for researchers to develop the right mindset, structure, and strategy when applying for grants. He explained that effective grant writing begins with concept development and the ability to link one's research to real-world challenges.

Dr. Nkwoala emphasized that researchers must ensure their proposals align with the funder's vision, noting that "the goal of a grant is to support scientific advancement and address global problems." He advised participants to carry out self-assessments and ensure that their research ideas match funding priorities before submitting applications.

He lamented the weak culture of mentorship between senior and junior

researchers in Nigeria, warning that it hinders scientific growth in the country. He called for stronger collaboration, guidance, and knowledge sharing to bridge this gap and strengthen the research ecosystem.

The keynote speaker also highlighted the importance of networking, urging participants to attend academic and professional conferences for meaningful engagement rather than mere attendance.

Nkwoala further advised researchers to have their proposals reviewed by senior colleagues before submission to enhance their quality and competitiveness.

Meanwhile, members of the OWSD Umudike Branch have expressed appreciation to the executive members for their dedication, innovative leadership, and numerous capacity-building programmes.

Dr. Oluomachi Nancy Uchenna of the Department of Biochemistry, MOUAU, in her appreciation message, commended Prof. Onwuka's led executive visionary leadership and inspiring mentorship, reaffirming the members' commitment to sustaining the organization's mission.

Present at the event were the Branch Secretary, Dr. Ann Kanu; Public Relations Officer, Dr. Rose Ogechi Obiozor; Treasurer, Dr. Ngozi Achi; Financial Secretary, Prof. Uchechi Obike; Assistant Secretary, Dr. Pearl Amadi; Project Officer, Dr. Jane Nwaekpe; and Assistant PRO, Mrs. Obigaeri Chimaraoke, among others.



Abuja Digest

with Sophina Ovuike
+2348037744514

Senate Directs Executive To Submit 2024 Budget Performance Report Within Two Weeks

The Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has directed the Executive to submit a comprehensive and documented report on the performance of the 2024 Budget within two weeks.

This directive was issued by the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, Senator Sani Musa, during an interactive session with the Economic Management Team led by the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, at the National Assembly.

Senator Musa noted that the submission of the report is a prerequisite for consideration of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and Fiscal Strategy Paper (FSP).

He emphasized that the National Assembly requires verifiable data on the implementation of the 2024 Appropriation Act in order to make informed decisions regarding the assumptions and projections of the proposed MTEF.

"The Senate cannot proceed with the consideration of the MTEF without first receiving a detailed account of the performance of the 2024 Budget," Senator Musa stated.

"Accordingly, we are giving the Executive up to October 23 to present a documented performance report, after which deliberations on the MTEF will commence."

The Senate reiterated its commitment to fiscal responsibility, accountability, and transparency in the appropriation process, assuring Nigerians that due diligence will be followed in all budgetary considerations.

SSDC Carries Huge Responsibility To Uplift South South

President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio, has urged the newly inaugurated Board and Management of the South South Development Commission (SSDC) to embrace their mandate with dedication, stressing that the Commission carries "a huge responsibility" to transform the South South region.

Akpabio made the charge in Abuja when the leadership of the SSDC, led by Chairman Prince Chibudom Nwuche and Managing Director Ms. Usoro Akpabio, paid him a courtesy visit.

According to a statement by his Special Assistant on Media and Communication, Anietie Ekong, the Senate President said the establishment of the SSDC represents a new chapter in the development of the region and called on its leaders to align their programmes with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

"The ball is now in your court to add value to the South South region through this development Commission," Akpabio declared.

"It is not a bonanza; it is a call to service. You must put on your thinking caps to add value to the economy of the nation and to the Renewed Hope Agenda of the President who set up this Commission."

The Senate President commended President Tinubu for establishing the Commission, describing it as a "well-deserved recognition" for a region that has sustained Nigeria's economy for decades through oil and gas resources.

He also applauded members of the National Assembly for passing the SSDC Bill into law, clarifying that unlike the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the SSDC's mandate covers the entire South South region, not just oil-producing communities.

Assuring the delegation of legislative backing, Akpabio pledged:

"We shall continue to support you to fully take off and execute major projects that we will come to commission. You can count on me, my office, and my colleagues in ensuring that you are adequately funded."

In his remarks, SSDC Chairman Prince Chibudom Nwuche expressed appreciation to President Tinubu, the Senate President, and the National Assembly for their roles in birthing the Commission. He pledged that under his leadership, the SSDC would faithfully implement its core mandate and avoid the mistakes of the past.

Managing Director and CEO, Ms. Usoro Akpabio, also lauded Senator Akpabio's visionary leadership, assuring that the Commission would prioritize both human capital development and infrastructural renewal.

"Our goal is to unlock the potentials and stranded wealth of the South South people," she stated. "The SSDC will serve as a model for other development agencies in Nigeria by driving sustainable, people-centered growth and regional transformation."

The visit marked the first official engagement between the Senate President and the SSDC leadership since the Commission's establishment.

Tinubu Grants Presidential Pardon To Ogoni Nine, 82 Inmates

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has approved a series of presidential pardons, posthumous clemencies, and national honours, marking a historic step toward reconciliation, restorative justice, and national unity.

Among those granted posthumous pardon are Nigerian nationalist Herbert Macaulay, co-founder of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC); the Ogoni Nine, executed in 1995 under the regime of the late General Sani Abacha; and Major-General Mamman Vatsa, a poet and military officer executed in 1986.

In addition, Farouk Lawan, a former member of the House of Representatives, and several other Nigerians — including Mrs. Anastasia Daniel Nwaobia, Hussaini Umar, and Ayinla Saadu Alanamu — were granted clemency following the recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy (PACPM), chaired by the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Prince Lateef Fagbemi, SAN.

Presidential spokesman



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

Bayo Onanuga confirmed the development in a statement released Thursday, noting that the decision followed the endorsement of the National Council of State which met in Abuja.

The President also extended clemency to 82 inmates across the country, reduced the prison terms of 65 others, and commuted the death sentences of seven inmates to life imprisonment. Furthermore, 959 Nigerians and foreigners were approved for national honours in recognition of their

outstanding contributions to national development.

The statement read in part:

"In exercising his constitutional power of mercy, President Tinubu granted clemency to 82 inmates and reduced the prison terms of 65 others. He commuted the death sentences of seven inmates to life imprisonment"

The PACPM, inaugurated on 15 January 2025 by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator

George Akume, reviewed 294 applications and interviewed 175 inmates across correctional centres nationwide.

Its recommendations were guided by considerations such as old age, terminal illness, good conduct, and evidence of rehabilitation.

Among the pardoned inmates were Nweke Francis Chibueze, serving a life sentence for drug trafficking, and Dr. Nwogu Peters, who had already served 12 of a 17-year term for fraud.

As part of the reconciliatory gesture, the Ogoni Nine — Ken Saro-Wiwa, Saturday Dobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbooko, Paul Levera, Felix Nuate, Baribor Bera, Barinem Kiobel, and John Kpuine — received formal presidential pardon.

The Ogoni Four — Chief Albert Badey, Chief Edward Kobani, Chief Samuel Orage, and Theophilus Orage — were awarded posthumous national honours.

President Tinubu's decision reflects his administration's unwavering commitment to justice sector reforms, rehabilitation, and national healing.

GOVERNMENT OF ABIA STATE OF NIGERIA

UKWA EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT

UKELG/ADM./156/ 037

PUBLIC NOTICE NO 1. OF 2025

INVITATION FOR TENDER

1. INTRODUCTION

Tenders are hereby invited from interested reputable Developers/Investors registered with Ukwa East Local Government for Construction of the following projects:

1. Construction of Four (4) Nos Model Evening Market, including Public Toilets, Solar Powered Water Pump, Solar Powered Lighting and Wash Area.

- Nkwo Ohuru
- Mkpukpoha
- Mkpukpuja
- Mkpajakere

2. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

a. Evidence of Certificate of Incorporation with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) including form CAC2

and CAC7;

b. Evidence of Company Income's Tax Clearance Certificate for the last three (3) years valid till 31st December, 2024;

c. Evidence of Current Pension Compliance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024;

d. Evidence of Current Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Compliance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2024;

e. Evidence of current Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) Compliance Certificate valid 31st December, 2024

f. Certificate of Registration on the National Database of Federal Contractors and Service Providers by submission of Interim Registration Report (IRR) expiring on 31st December, 2024 or valid Certificate issued by BPP

g. Company's Audited Accounts for the last three (3) years - 2021, 2022, 2023

h. Company Profile with Curriculum vitae of Technical/Management Staff and with evidence of previous work experiences, details clients, nature of works/contract, contract sum and copies of academic and professional qualification, i.e COREN, QSRBN, etc

i. Verifiable documentary evidence of similar jobs executed in the last five (5) years including letters of Award, Valuation Certificate, Job Completion Certificates and Photographs of the projects;

j. Evidence of Finance Capability to execute the Projects including reference letters from a reputable Commercial Bank including willingness to provide Credit Facility for the Execution of the Projects when needed.

k. Sworn Affidavit disclosing whether or not any Officer of the relevant committees of Ukwa East Tender Board or the Management of Ukwa East Local Government is a former or present Director, shareholder or has any pecuniary interest in the bidder and to confirm that all information presented in its bid are true and correct in all particulars.

l. An Affidavit that none of the Directors have been convicted in any country for any criminal offence, including fraud or financial impropriety.

m. List of Plants/Equipment with proof of Ownership/Lease

n. All documents for submission must be transmitted with a covering/forwarding letter under the company/firms letter headed paper bearing amongst others, the Registration Number (RC), Contact address, Telephone number and E-mail address. The letter headed paper must bear the Names and Nationalities of the Directors of the Company, duly signed by the authorized officer of the company/firm.

g. Documents submitted shall be subjected to due diligence without recourse to the bidder.

3. COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS

Interested companies are to collect the Standard Bidding Document (SBD) from the Head of the Departments of Works and Housing, Ukwa East Local Government with evidence of payment of Registration fee of Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand naira (₦250,000) only and a Non-refundable Tender Fee of Two Hundred Thousand naira (₦200,000) only for procurement of Works, to "Ukwa East IGR Account". Evidence of such payments is to be presented to the Cashier Officer, Ukwa East Finance

Department for collection of official receipt.

4. SUBMISSION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS

Prospective bidders are to submit a bid for the Lot, two (2) hard copies of Technical and Financial Bids packaged separately in sealed envelopes and marked as "Technical Bid" and "Financial Bid". Thereafter, put the two sealed envelopes together in a bigger sealed envelope and

addressed to THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, UKWA EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ABIA STATE, clearly mark (the name of the project and lot) and written at the back of the envelope) and to reach the undersigned not later than Twenty-One (21) days from the date of publication of this notice.

Furthermore, the reverse side of the envelope should be marked with the name and address of the bidder and dropped at the Head of Service Office, not later than 12:00 noon Wednesday, 22nd October, 2025.

5. OPENING OF BIDS

The Technical bids will be opened immediately after the close of submission at 12:00 noon on Wednesday, 22nd October, 2025, at the Conference Room, Executive Chairman's Office, Ukwa East, in the presence of the bidders or their representatives and civil society organizations. The Financial bids, however, will remain unopened. The successful bidders will be invited to the financial bid opening after the evaluation of the Technical bids. Please ensure you sign the Bid Submission Register in the Office of the Head of Service, Ukwa East Local Government.

Comrade Emeka Vincent Akparanta

Ag. Head of Service

For: Executive Chairman

Ukwa East Local Government Area

UKELG/ ADM./156/037

Ukwa East Local Government, Akwete.

15th October, 2025

Focus

Nigeria and The Growing Burden Of Non-communicable Diseases

Across Nigeria's bustling cities and quiet rural communities, a silent crisis is unfolding — one that kills more people every year than infectious diseases, accidents, or insurgency combined. It is the growing menace of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, diabetes, stroke, cancer, and chronic respiratory illnesses. Once thought to be "diseases of the rich," these ailments now cut across social classes, affecting farmers in Benue, teachers in Enugu, artisans in Lagos, and traders in Kano.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), NCDs account for nearly 30% of all deaths in Nigeria, a figure that continues to climb each year. Yet, the country's health system remains largely structured to fight infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS — leaving a dangerous gap in the prevention and management of lifestyle-related illnesses.

Paradoxically, the rise of NCDs in Nigeria is not only a result of affluence but also of poverty. Across many low-income communities, people consume cheap, processed foods loaded with sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats. The once vibrant culture of eating fresh fruits, vegetables, and locally prepared meals has been eroded by urbanization and the proliferation of fast-food outlets.

"Most Nigerians today eat to fill the stomach, not to nourish the body," says Dr. Tunde Akinyemi, a public health physician based in Ibadan. "We are living fast, eating fast, and dying fast. Obesity, hypertension, and diabetes are now common even among people in their 30s."

Compounding the problem is a sedentary lifestyle. Many Nigerians spend long hours in traffic, at desks, or on their phones, with minimal physical activity. The result is a population gradually losing its vitality — one in which stroke, heart attack, and kidney failure are increasingly common among the young and middle-aged.

The economic and social costs of this health transition are staggering. A 2023 report by Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health estimates that productivity losses due to NCDs exceed ₦3 trillion annually — a figure equivalent to nearly 2% of the nation's GDP. Families are pushed into poverty by the cost of managing chronic diseases, which require lifelong medication and regular checkups rarely covered by health insurance.

For example, the average hypertensive patient spends between ₦15,000 and ₦30,000 monthly on drugs and clinic visits. For a diabetic, the figure can double. "Many patients simply stop their medication because they can't afford it," explains Nurse Amaka Eze, who works at a general hospital in Abia State. "By the time they come back, their condition has worsened. Some die quietly at home."

This reality highlights another critical flaw — Nigeria's weak primary healthcare system. Most local health centres lack the equipment and expertise to diagnose or monitor NCDs. Many rural clinics do not even have functioning blood pressure

monitors, let alone facilities for blood sugar or cholesterol testing. Consequently, millions of Nigerians live with undiagnosed conditions until complications set in.

Urban residents are not spared either. While major cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt boast private hospitals and diagnostic centres, these services are largely unaffordable for the average citizen. Health insurance coverage in Nigeria remains below 10%, and even among the insured, the benefits are often limited.

sugary drinks and junk food through aggressive advertising has further normalized unhealthy habits.

"Many young people now think it's cool to skip breakfast, survive on energy drinks, and eat late-night shawarma," laments Dr. Bimbo Olawale, a Lagos-based nutritionist. "But the body keeps score. These habits plant the seeds of disease early."

Mental health challenges — anxiety, depression, and drug dependence — also play a role, creating a vicious cycle between emotional distress and physical illness.



"The urban poor are at high risk," notes Professor Amina Yusuf, a lecturer in Community Health at the University of Abuja. "They are surrounded by processed food, pollution, and stress — yet they lack access to preventive healthcare. Meanwhile, those in rural areas are battling ignorance and lack of facilities. It's a lose-lose situation."

Perhaps the most alarming dimension of the crisis is the growing vulnerability of Nigerian youth. Studies have shown a sharp increase in obesity, hypertension, and pre-diabetes among young adults, driven by poor diet, alcohol consumption, and substance abuse. The glamorization of

Experts agree that reversing the tide of NCDs in Nigeria will require more than individual discipline — it demands a systemic policy overhaul. The National Policy and Strategic Plan of Action on NCDs, first introduced in 2013, has suffered poor implementation due to inadequate funding and weak political will.

What Nigeria needs, according to health advocates, is a multi-sectoral approach:

Taxation and regulation of sugary drinks and tobacco products.

Public health campaigns to promote exercise and healthy diets.

School-based programs that teach nutrition and physical education.

Workplace wellness initiatives in both public and private sectors.

Increased budgetary allocation for preventive healthcare and NCD management.

"The government must treat this as a national emergency," insists Dr. Emmanuel Oche, a cardiologist at the National Hospital, Abuja. "We have focused too long on curative medicine. Prevention is cheaper and more sustainable."

There is, however, a glimmer of hope. The rise of digital health startups and mobile-based monitoring solutions is helping bridge some gaps in access. Apps that track blood pressure, sugar levels, and medication adherence are increasingly popular among tech-savvy Nigerians. Telemedicine platforms now connect patients in remote communities to specialists in urban centres.

Moreover, community-based programs led by NGOs and faith-based organizations are gaining traction. Initiatives such as free medical outreaches, lifestyle seminars, and health walks are helping to raise awareness. Yet, as observers note, these efforts must be scaled up and sustained.

Health, as the saying goes, is wealth — and no nation can rise above the health of its citizens. Nigeria's journey toward sustainable development cannot be complete without addressing the burden of non-communicable diseases. The time has come for government, civil society, the private sector, and individuals to act in concert.

Citizens must adopt healthier lifestyles: eat balanced meals, exercise regularly, avoid smoking and excessive drinking, and go for periodic health checks. Communities must organize health awareness campaigns, while policymakers must enact and enforce laws that promote wellness.

As Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, once said, "No one should have to choose between death and financial ruin because of a disease they could have prevented." For Nigeria, that message is more urgent than ever.

Sidebar: Key Facts on NCDs in Nigeria

29% of all deaths in Nigeria are due to non-communicable diseases.

Hypertension affects an estimated 30% of adults aged 30-70.

Only about 5% of Nigerians regularly check their blood pressure.

Over 80% of diabetes cases remain undiagnosed.

Less than 10% of Nigerians have health insurance coverage.

Nigeria stands at a crossroads. The diseases that now threaten our nation are not contagious — but they are spreading faster than ever, driven by lifestyle, neglect, and poor policy. If urgent action is not taken, the silent epidemic of non-communicable diseases could become our next national emergency. The time to act is now.

Chukwuemeka Egejuru, A Public Health Analyst writes from Umuahia, Abia State

If urgent action is not taken, the silent epidemic of non-communicable diseases could become our next national emergency.



Religion

Operating In The Supernatural

By David Oyedepo Jnr

The supernatural is not a mystery to be admired but a reality to be experienced. Every child of God is ordained to operate in the supernatural. It is not the exclusive reserve of pastors, prophets, or apostles. It is the heritage of everyone who is born of God.

Jesus said in John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth... so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." This means that if you are born of the Spirit, you are designed to function like the wind — uncontrollable, unstoppable, and unpredictable. You are not meant to be a victim of situations; you are to be a commander of them.

When you gave your life to Christ, you did not join a religious association. You were initiated into a divine family. You were translated from the realm of the natural into the realm of the supernatural. That is why the Scripture says, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4).

Unfortunately, many believers today live far below their redemptive rights

because of ignorance. You cannot manifest what you do not know. Revelation is the mother of manifestation. Until your eyes are opened, your life remains closed. The light of the Word is what unveils your true identity in Christ.

Faith is the vital bridge between the invisible and the visible. The Bible declares in Mark 9:23, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Faith is not a feeling; it is a spiritual force that draws on the integrity of God to deliver results.

Faith is not passive. It is active obedience to God's Word. When you act on the Word even when it appears unreasonable, that is faith at work. The supernatural always answers to faith.

Consider Abraham. When God told him to leave his father's house to an unknown land, he obeyed instantly. That act of obedience turned him into a global wonder. Every act of obedience in faith provokes supernatural manifestations. God speaks, man obeys, and miracles occur.

The same was true for Moses. When he stretched his rod over the Red Sea, it parted. When Peter stepped out of the

boat, he walked on water. Faith turns divine instructions into miraculous experiences. Every time faith acts, God confirms His Word.

Faith is not wishing; it is working. It is not waiting for things to happen; it is doing what the Word says so that things must happen.

The supernatural thrives on covenant responsibility. God is not a respecter of persons; He is a respecter of principles. The covenant is God's system of guaranteed performance.

Deuteronomy 28:1-2 says, "If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God... the LORD thy God shall set thee on high above all nations of the earth." The covenant is a two-way

street — when you play your part, God is committed to play His.

You cannot live carelessly and expect to operate supernaturally. Obedience is the key that unlocks divine manifestations. Stop begging for what obedience guarantees. When you do what God says, He is bound by His integrity to perform His Word.

Every commandment of God is designed for your advancement. God does not need your obedience to remain God; you need obedience to manifest as His child. Obedience is not to impress God; it is to empower you.

The Holy Spirit is the custodian of the supernatural. Without Him, Christianity is

empty. Acts 1:8 says, "You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Power is not generated by effort; it is transmitted by the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of power, wisdom, and revelation. He turns ordinary men into extraordinary vessels. Every giant in the Kingdom is a product of the Spirit at work within.

When the Holy Spirit fills your life, your words carry fire, your steps carry authority, and your life becomes a mystery. But you must maintain intimacy with Him through prayer, worship, and meditation on the Word.

The Holy Spirit does not visit occasionally; He dwells permanently in yielded hearts. Make your heart His home, and your life will become His stage for demonstration.

Serving God wholeheartedly is one of the surest triggers for supernatural manifestation. The Word says in Exodus 23:25, "You shall serve the LORD your God, and He shall bless your bread and your water."

When you make God's business your priority, He makes your business His

responsibility. Every genuine steward is a candidate for divine backing. You cannot serve God and end up stranded.

Kingdom service is not a departmental activity; it is a covenant act of devotion. When you serve God's interests with your time, energy, and resources, He decorates you with supernatural favour.

Even Jesus, our perfect example, said, "I am among you as one that serveth." Greatness in the Kingdom is measured not by titles but by service.

To sustain the supernatural, you must guard against sin and unbelief. Sin breaks the connection between man and God. Isaiah 59:2 says, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." The supernatural cannot operate in a polluted atmosphere.

Unbelief is another major barrier. It is spiritual paralysis. It renders faith impotent. Stop analyzing divine instructions — just obey. The Word works only for those who work it.

Every time you doubt God, you disconnect from His power. But when you believe without wavering, you compel divine intervention.

Every commandment of God is designed for your advancement. God does not need your obedience to remain God.

Family Matters

By Faith Oyedepo

The home is the foundation of every society, the cradle of character formation, and the first institution God created for the training and nurturing of mankind. It is not just a place of shelter or a resting point after the day's work; it is an institution designed by God to shape lives, build virtues, and raise the next generation of responsible citizens.

Every family, whether rich or poor, large or small, contributes directly to the state of the society. When homes function properly, societies flourish; when homes fail, societies crumble. The home determines the strength of the church, the stability of the community, and the destiny of the nation. A home filled with love, understanding, and discipline produces men and women of honour, while a home plagued by strife, neglect, and immorality breeds confusion and destruction.

Among all institutions on earth, the home bears the greatest responsibility for shaping a child's destiny. The church, the school, and even the government only build upon what the home has already established. If the home fails in its duty, these other institutions struggle to make up for it. Many of the moral and social problems plaguing our world today — drug addiction, theft, fraud, prostitution, and violence — can be traced back to the failure of homes. Every criminal, every wayward youth, and every broken adult once lived in a home. No one dropped from the sky; everyone came from a family.

The saying, "Charity begins at home," is not just a proverb; it is a divine principle. A child learns love, respect, honesty, and self-control first from the family setting. If these are not taught at home, society will have to deal with the negative results later. Parents must therefore understand that child training is a sacred assignment, not an optional duty.

Raising a child does not depend solely on formal training or structured lectures. Some of the most impactful lessons a child learns come from informal, everyday interactions. Every moment in the home can become a teaching moment — during meals, while doing household chores, in the kitchen, during bedtime, or even while watching television.

Children learn more by observation than by instruction. They watch how their parents speak, behave, and relate with others. A father who constantly complains about his employer is unconsciously teaching his child rebellion. A mother who gossips about church members or neighbours is unknowingly planting seeds of malice in her children. Thus, every word and action in the home matters. Parents must be intentional about modelling godly character before their children.

The spiritual and emotional atmosphere of a home determines what kind of seeds grow there. A home filled with anger, bitterness, or quarrels cannot produce peace-loving children. The Bible says, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16). When the home becomes a

battleground of accusations, shouting, and resentment, the Holy Spirit cannot dwell there.

Parents must, therefore, make deliberate efforts to cultivate peace and unity in their homes. Speak words of encouragement, express gratitude often, and create an atmosphere of laughter and joy. Pray together as a family. Let the Word of God be read and discussed regularly. When a home is filled with God's presence, the children grow in wisdom, security, and confidence.

Interestingly, the Bible reveals in Jeremiah 22:29: "O earth, earth, earth, hear

the word of the LORD." This means that the ground of your home absorbs every word spoken within it. Words of anger, gossip, or curses pollute that spiritual environment, but words of love, prayer, and faith invite God's presence. Every parent must therefore guard the words that proceed from their mouth. Remember, your words are seeds — whatever you sow today, you and your children will reap tomorrow.

While both parents play vital roles in child training, the mother often determines the spiritual temperature of the home. She influences not only the mood of the family but also the values the children grow up with. Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "Give me good mothers, and I will give you a great nation." How true that is!

A godly mother is not necessarily one with wealth or status, but one who walks in love, humility, and the fear of God. Her tenderness provides emotional stability, while her discipline instills responsibility. Her prayers form a spiritual covering over her children. She may not always receive applause, but heaven records every seed of love and sacrifice she sows.

As a mother, you set the tone for your home. When you wake up in the morning, your attitude affects everyone around you. A cheerful, prayerful woman fills her home with warmth and security, while a bitter, angry woman drains it of peace. Decide today to make your home a place where God's presence is welcome a sanctuary of love, not a battlefield of words.

The Home: An Institution For Child Training

Parents must, therefore, make deliberate efforts to cultivate peace and unity in their homes.

Advert



ABIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UTURU

ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE POST OF EXTERNAL
AUDITOR FOR ABIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UTURU

The Abia State University Governing Council hereby invites applications from suitably qualified, experienced and practicing firm of Chartered Accountants for consideration as External Auditor for the University.

Responsibility:

The External Auditor shall be responsible for the periodic auditing of accounts of the University, according to the Law and Financial Regulations governing the institution.

Qualification:

Interested applicants for the position must be registered with the office of the Auditor General, Abia State.

Tenure:

The appointment will be for five (5) years only, renewable at the discretion of the Governing Council

Remuneration:

Remuneration is negotiable.

Method of Application:

Interested applicants should forward their applications, in not less than ten (10) copies, to be addressed to the registrar/Secretary to Council, Abia State University, P.M.B 2000, Uturu/ or email: registrar @abiastateuniversity.edu.ng along with details of their curriculum vitae, not later than ten (10) days from the date of this publication.

Applicants should also request their referees to send confidential reports on them, direct to the Registrar/Secretary to Council. Each submission should be in a sealed envelope with the desired post clearly marked at the top left-hand corner.

Only shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview.

Dr. Acho Elendu,
Registrar/Secretary to Council.



ABIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UTURU

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR DESIGN, BUILD,
FINANCE, OPERATE AND TRANSFER OF GUEST
HOUSE AND RESORT ON THE CAMPUS OF
ABIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UTURU

Abia State University Governing Council invites credible local and international investors, project developers, financiers and operators with proven expertise and track record of successful project delivery, to express their interest in the development of the University Guest House & Resort. The Guest House & Resort should offer a 3-star hospitality experience with a minimum of 50 rooms.

Expression of Interest Process:

Interested parties are invited to submit their expression of interest outlining their relevant experience, qualifications and proposed model/approach for design, build, finance, operate and transfer of the guest house and resort on the campus of Abia State University, Uturu.

Submissions should be in ten (10) hard copies (and soft copy of the submission in flash drive) in sealed enveloped marked: "Expression of Interest for the design and build of Guest House and Resort" to be addressed to:
Registrar/Secretary to Council,
Abia State University, P. M. B 2000, Uturu
Or email: registrar@abiastateuniversity.edu.ng.
within twenty-one (21) days of this publication.

Abia State University is committed to ensuring a transparent and competitive selection process, and all expressions of interest will be evaluated in accordance with applicable regulations and best practices.

Dr. Acho Elendu
Registrar/Secretary to Council

Photos Speak



Left to right: Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, and Senator Darlington Nwokocho, at the 60th Birthday Thanksgiving Mass of Dr. Ike Chioke, CEO of Triple A Infrastructure Nigeria Ltd, held at the Holy Ghost Cathedral, Enugu.



L-R: Dr. Ike Chioke, CEO of Triple A Infrastructure Nigeria Ltd; Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Otti; and wife of Dr. Chioke, during the 60th Birthday Thanksgiving Mass of Dr. Ike Chioke, held at the Holy Ghost Cathedral, Enugu, Enugu State.



L-R: Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Otti, and Hon. Chris Nkwonta, Member representing Ukwa East/West Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, during the commissioning of roads in Aba by President Bola Tinubu.



Left to Right: Abia Deputy Governor, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Ben Kalu, Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti; Minister of Works, Sen. David Umahi, and Abia State Secretary to the Government, Prof. Kenneth Kanu during the road commissioning in Aba by President Tinubu.



Left to right: Minister of State for Labour and Productivity, Hon. Nkiruka Onyejeocha, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Ben Kalu; Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, Minister of Works, Sen. David Umahi (representing President Tinubu) Abia Deputy Governor, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu; and others at the road commissioning event in Aba.



Hon. Justice Lilian Abai, the Chief Judge of Abia State (9th Left) flanked by her right, His brother Judge, Hon. Justice KCJ Okereke and her left, His worship, Nnaemeka Orji, The chairman Magistrate Association of Nigeria (MAN) and others shortly after the Health walk physical exercise.



Engr. Enyinnaya Okereke, Board Member of the Umuahia Capital Development Authority (left), and Hon. Jones Ike, General Manager of the Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation (seated), during the unveiling of the Geriatrics Village Project and the book launch of Nature & Nurture: Beyond My Autobiography, Vol. 1, written by Rev. Father Anokwuru Christian Uche, PhD, held at the Main Auditorium, JAAC Building, Umuahia, Abia State.



Mrs. Uma Ukpai remained seated as Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno, cut short the State Executive Council meeting to personally lead Council members on a condolence visit to the family of the late Reverend Dr. Uma Ukpai, renowned evangelist and founder of the Uma Ukpai Evangelistic Association.

News

SSIT Hosts National Conference On Emerging Technologies

By Nwokoma Blessing and
Onyema Chinaza

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) redefine global innovation, experts at the 3rd National Conference of the School of Science and Industrial Technology (SSIT), Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba, formally (Abia State Polytechnics) have called for greater investment in scientific research and innovation by various stakeholders, to drive national development and competitiveness among the comity of nations.

The conference with the theme: "LEVERAGING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE SCIENTIFIC INNOVATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT," kick started recently under the leadership of the Dean SSIT, Dr. Akuagwu Nneka Agbanyim, and the Local Organizing Committee (LOC), Dr. Eric Ogbonnaya. Participants drawn from the academia, industry, and policy circles were on ground with the singular hope of being impacted upon positively in the cause of the conference.

The Rector of Dr Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Chris Okoro Kalu while declaring the conference open opined that the potentials and gains of AI in bettering the lots of the society and moreso in making teaching and learning easier and to the global standard.

Okoro who served as chief host, charged the stated judicious use of the opportunity to move

from theoretical research to practical innovation.

We cannot continue to rely on the era of the white beards, looking only at papers." It is time to step out of our comfort zones and engage in innovations that can transform our society. We have written enough papers in this country; now is the time to implement them.

He further announced that, moving forward, promotion to senior academic ranks would be tied to innovation outputs.

"Within the next five years, anyone aspiring to become a Chief Lecturer must have at least two patents, verifiable innovations with measurable impact," he added.

Delivering the keynote address, Deputy Rector (Administration), Dr. Chizaram A. Ogbuji, spoke on "Indigenous Research and Its Relevance to Community Development." He emphasised the need for home-grown research that promotes inclusion and unity.

"Indigenous research should not perpetuate partitioning or make people second-class citizens in their own communities," he said.

In his presentation, Dr. Christopher C. Onyemenonu, Deputy Rector (Academics) and former Acting Rector of the Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, urged participants to strengthen creativity and critical thinking, Skills, he described as "irreplaceable in an era of automation.



Members of the Abia State Labour Party (LP) Caucus in the House of Representatives.

Abia LP House of Reps Caucus Slams Ben Kalu over 'Unguided Utterances' Against Otti

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia Labour Party [LP] House of Representatives Caucus has condemned what it described as the "unguarded and unhealthy utterances" of the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives and member representing Bende Federal Constituency, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu, warning that his actions threaten the peace and unity of the state.

In a press statement issued recently, the caucus said it was dismayed by "a recent unfortunate political development in our dear state, Abia," allegedly triggered by Ben Kalu's comments and conduct.

The lawmakers recalled that in 2024, when newly elected officials were still settling down to governance, Hon. Kalu "fired the first political salvo," boasting that the All Progressives Congress (APC) would "capture Abia" in

2027 and "flaunting his 'number six' position in the federal hierarchy as if political power were a personal trophy".

According to the caucus, "Such careless talk, repeated shortly after assuming office as deputy speaker was not only unintelligent and insensitive but also unbecoming of a public officer who ought to embody humility and emotional intelligence".

The group accused the deputy speaker of exhibiting "arrogance and recklessness, making "provocative, sycophantic and inflammatory statements both publicly and privately," which they said were aimed at "inciting the Federal Government and the ruling party at the centre against the Abia State Government".

The lawmakers alleged that Hon. Kalu's recent political moves were "not about service, they are about personal ambition and power-drunk tendencies, even at the expense

of peace of Abia State".

They emphasised that Governor Alex Otti "has consistently shown respect for both the age and the exalted office of Mr. President", and therefore, Ben Kalu "is expected to accord due respect to the governor, not only in recognition of his office as the State's Chief Executive but also in deference to his age, in keeping with Igbo cultural values and proper upbringing".

The statement noted that despite differences in party affiliation, Governor Otti had extended goodwill to Hon. Kalu upon his emergence as deputy speaker by hosting an elaborate state reception in his honour, attended by Labour Party officials and federal legislators.

It added that the governor had also directed all Abia LP members in the House to support Kalu's emergence for the position.

"This co-operation should have been reciprocated by Hon. Kalu. Sadly, he has chosen

instead to stoke the embers of political disharmony in Abia", the lawmakers lamented.

The caucus advised Kalu to engage in "sober self-reflection", reminding him that "many have occupied and will still occupy that seat, decorum, not arrogance, defines true leadership."

They commended governor Otti's performance, highlighting numerous federal projects facilitated and executed by his administration, including Port Harcourt Road, Ohafia-Arochuku Road, Omenuko Bridge, and the 25 km Umuhia-Ikot Ekpen Road, soon to be flagged off".

The caucus urged Kalu to use his influence as deputy speaker and his much-vaunted "number six" position to support Governor Otti's projects "for Abia's growth, rather than playing cheap politics in his six years as a member of the House of Representatives".

They added; "If the massive public endorsement of Governor Otti's achievements, witnessed recently in Aba as applauded by the president who was ably represented by Distinguished Senator David Umahi and the good people of Abia at the flag-off ceremony unsettles Hon. Kalu, that is no justification to pursue mischief and incitement".

"If he persists on this trajectory, he may find himself at odds with Ndi Abia. Abians and Nigerians are hereby urged to disregard Hon. Kalu's empty boasts and divisive rhetoric. His actions are driven by selfish ambition, not love for the people".

The LP House of Reps Caucus reaffirmed their support for Governor Otti, noting that "no amount of political scheming by Hon. Kalu can disrupt Abia's steady progress, the people of Abia "are politically discerning" and can see through "Hon. Kalu's selfish antics."

They, therefore, called on Abians from all works of life irrespective of political affiliation to stand united in support of the transformational work of Governor Alex Otti "and to reject attempts by any individual to drag the state backwards for personal gain".

Abia State Budget Defence: Chief of Staff Pledges Accountability

By Charles Ogbonnaya

The Deputy Chief of Staff to the Abia State Deputy Governor, Mr. Chijioke Nwankwo, has reaffirmed the administration's commitment to accountability, transparency, and prudent resource management during the 2026 budget defence session for the Office of the Deputy Governor.

Speaking on behalf of the Deputy Governor, Ikechukwu Emetu, Mr. Nwankwo presented the proposed 2026 budget before the Ministry of Budget and Planning, emphasising the office's constitutional role in supporting the governor and advancing the administration's policy thrust.

Tagged the "Budget of Consolidation," the 2026 fiscal plan is geared towards strengthening human capital development and accelerating socio-economic and infrastructural growth. Nwankwo highlighted key focus areas, including agricultural expansion, peace-building, and the continuation of people-oriented initiatives.

Reflecting on the office's performance in

2025, he cited the deputy governor's active involvement in committees promoting peace, reconciliation, and agricultural revitalization initiatives aligned with Governor Otti's governance agenda.

Nwankwo appealed for an upward review of the office's budgetary allocation, noting that increased funding would enhance operational efficiency and service delivery.

Responding, the Commissioner for Budget and Planning, Hon. Kingsley Anosike, underscored the importance of the budget defence exercise, describing it as a vital step in determining the state's spending priorities amid limited resources.

He urged Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to streamline their requests in line with fiscal realities, while reiterating that the 2026 budget is designed to consolidate ongoing developmental efforts.

The session ended on a constructive note, with officials including the Director of Administration, Rev. Sister Iheme Nkemdirichukwu; Director of Finance, Mr. Nmecha Udo; and other finance personnel in attendance.

News

Gov Otti Appreciates Teachers

By Charles Ogbomaya

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has paid glowing tribute to teachers across the state, describing them as "nation builders, torchbearers of knowledge, and architects of tomorrow."

Speaking at the 2025 World Teachers' Day celebration in Umuahia, Governor Otti, represented by his Deputy, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu, commended the dedication and resilience of teachers in shaping the state's future.

He emphasised his administration's commitment to improving the welfare of educators, citing prompt salary payments, enhanced welfare packages, and continuous professional development initiatives as key achievements.

The governor highlighted the AbiaFIRST Education Programme, an ambitious reform agenda designed to expand access to quality education. The programme includes free and compulsory education from Primary 1 to Junior Secondary School 3 (JSS3), the construction of Smart Schools, and the overhaul of public school infrastructure across the state.

"Education is the bedrock of any meaningful development, and we are investing in it deliberately," he said, expressing appreciation to teachers for their tireless service.

In his Paper presentation, the Vice Chancellor, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Professor Maduebibisi Iwe, described Teaching as a collaborative Profession that involves educating and mentoring Learners, and enumerated some challenges facing the Teaching Profession to include poor funding, logistics, infrastructures, access to quality and underrating the teaching Profession.

In his address, the Commissioner for Basic and Secondary Education, Elder Goodluck Ubochi, stated that the strength of any society lies in the value it places on its teachers. He lauded Governor Otti for restoring the dignity of the teaching profession in Abia.

"Thank you for believing in education and in our teachers. Every teacher represents the heartbeat of our education system," he added.

Also speaking, the National President of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), Comrade Titus Amba, represented by the NUT National Representative for Imo State, Comrade Anokwuru Eber, reflected on the global significance of World Teachers' Day, first proclaimed by UNESCO in 1994.

He commended the Abia State Government for embracing the vision of quality education and aligning with teachers' needs, while urging further action on teacher training, enhanced welfare, and smart learning initiatives.

"Preparing our teachers for the future with robust support systems is vital for effective service delivery," he stated.

Delivering his keynote address, the State Chairman of the NUT, Comrade Madu Friday Chukwujekwu, noted that this year's theme, "Recasting Teaching as a Collaborative Profession", with the sub-theme "Together for Teachers, Together for Tomorrow," reflects the crucial role of collective support in advancing education.

He praised Governor Otti for prioritizing education, as demonstrated in the 2025 budget, the mass recruitment of teachers, and the implementation of free, compulsory basic education in the state.

"The future we desire depends on how we treat and support our teachers today," Chukwujekwu concluded.

World Teachers' Day is observed annually on October 5, to celebrate the vital contributions of teachers and recognize their role in shaping minds, building character, and inspiring dreams.

Responding on behalf of the newly recruited teachers, the Coordinator of the 2025 Newly Recruited Abia Teachers, Mrs Goodluck Ogbonna commended Governor, Otti, for granting them employment into Abia State Civil Service and vowed to reciprocate the kind gesture of the governor by ensuring that Abia children acquire quality education.



Governor of River State, Fubara

Calls Grow For Probe As Fubara Threatens To Punish Erring Officials

By Nzeuzor Jane, Port Harcourt

Debate continues to intensify in Rivers State following Governor Siminalayi Fubara's recent warning that permanent secretaries who allegedly aided illegal acts during the six-month emergency rule will face strict punishment.

Governor Fubara said recently that his administration will not hesitate to discipline any public officer found guilty of misconduct or administrative irregularities during the interim administration. The statement, which has since generated widespread public interest, is seen by many as a bold move to restore accountability in the state's civil service.

In an exclusive interview, a labour law expert, Dr. Emma Wosu, said the governor is constitutionally empowered to discipline erring public officials, provided that due process is observed.

"The governor has the authority to act independently on matters concerning discipline within the civil service. However, such actions must follow proper investigations and align with established civil service rules," Dr. Wosu explained.

Dr. Wosu, a senior lecturer in the Department of Commercial and Industrial Law in Rivers State University, emphasised that the level of punishment should correspond to the gravity of the offence committed.

"It depends on the kind of offence. Some infractions warrant suspension, while others may attract outright dismissal. The most important thing is that the process is fair and lawful," he added.

He further noted that public officers who feel victimized by government action retain the right to seek redress through the courts.

"Anybody who feels wrongly punished can go to court. If a civil servant believes his rights has been infringed upon, the law provides a channel to challenge such decisions," he stated.

Governor Fubara's comments have also revived calls from civil society groups and political observers for an

independent probe into the activities of the former sole administrator who governed the state during the emergency rule period. Many residents believe that the investigation should go beyond the civil service and extend to top officials who allegedly benefited from the irregularities.

A social critic, Promise Dappa, urged the governor to include Retired Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas, the former sole administrator, in the probe, saying that transparency and justice demand full disclosure of any wrongdoing.

"He must expose all acts of corruption. Even if he cannot personally prosecute, he should make the findings public so that relevant authorities can take it up. Accountability begins with

truth," Dappa said.

Dappa, however, expressed doubts about the Fubara administration's ability to conduct a fully independent inquiry, alleging that political influence continues to undermine genuine governance in the state.

"You cannot have a government that is controlled from somewhere else. A true government should be independent and free from political shackles. What Rivers people need is leadership that represents the will of the people," he remarked.

He lamented that the current political atmosphere in Rivers State reflects deep divisions and growing disillusionment among citizens, many of whom believe their voices have been sidelined

in the ongoing power tussle.

Political analysts have described the unfolding situation as a test of Fubara's political resolve, noting that how he handles the matter could determine his long-term credibility and his relationship with the state's civil service.

Meanwhile, several advocacy groups have called on the government to prioritize transparency and fairness in any disciplinary action to prevent victimization of innocent officers.

As public interest grows, all eyes remain on Government House, Port Harcourt, to see whether the Fubara administration will make good on its promise to cleanse the system or succumb to political pressures that have long shaped governance in Rivers State.

Analyst Faults Tinubu's Independence Day Speech

From Nzeuzor Jane, Port Harcourt

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Independence Day broadcast continues to generate diverse reactions across the country. While some have praised the president's optimism, others believe his claims do not reflect the current realities Nigerians face.

A business analyst, Mr. Ignatius Chukwu, has openly challenged the president's assertion that corruption has ended in Nigeria. Speaking in an interview with our reporter, Mr. Chukwu described the claim as "not entirely true."

"The president said that corruption has ended in his country, but what we see every day proves otherwise. You cannot submit a form or file in most government offices without paying money. So when the president says corruption has ended, I wonder if he is referring to another country," he said.

Chukwu, who is also the Regional Editor of Business Day Newspaper, drew a parallel between Nigeria's

current state and its post-independence struggles, noting that some government policies still carry the traces of pre-independence and post-civil war challenges.

"The president proudly said that we are building a nation where every Nigerian can find accommodation anywhere in the country. That would have been a beautiful message—if it were true. Sometimes, when I look at the way policies are made and implemented, it feels like the civil war never really ended," he added. The attitudes and political behaviours we see today still reflect those old wounds. Several government policies still reflect the struggles of Nigeria's pre-independence and post-civil war eras," he remarked.

Despite his criticisms, Chukwu agreed with President Tinubu's statement that there is hope for economic recovery, acknowledging that some economic indicators show signs of improvement.

"The president mentioned that the economy is showing signs of growth, and that is true to some extent. The GDP is

performing better than expected—growing at around four percent when international bodies predicted about three percent. Inflation has dropped from over 33 percent to about 20.2 percent. Although the same administration caused the initial spike, I still consider this decline an achievement," he said.

Chukwu urged concluded by urging the government to match its optimistic rhetoric with visible action, especially in tackling corruption and ensuring fair implementation of economic policies.

He drew a parallel between Nigeria's current state and its post-independence struggles, noting that some government policies still carry the traces of pre-independence and post-civil war challenges.

"Sometimes, when I look at the way policies are made and implemented, it feels like the civil war never really ended." The attitudes and political behaviours we see today still reflect those old wounds," she further stated

Opinion

Abia State: It's Time To 'kick Ass'

By Ernie Onumere

My interest in Donald Trump before he became American president started with his reality TV show 'The Apprentice' and his book 'Think Big and Kick Ass'. From the maverick entrepreneur-turned-politician, I learned valuable lessons that I think His Excellency, Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti and Ndi Abia should take note of as desperate politicians have now railroaded us into premature politicking for a distant future election.

The hard-hitting, fearless and unapologetic Donald Trump in his book mentioned above advises readers to retaliate strongly against those who wrong them, emphasizing the importance of maintaining respect and not letting bullies go unchallenged. Hear him: "Respond to wrongs with severity to demonstrate strength and maintain respect." In business, politics and sometimes even social relations, some situations demand such Trump-like stern responses because 'nice guys' or gentlemen can be taken for a ride in a ruthless world.

Let's come home. In 1983, Dee Sam Mbakwe, former governor old Imo State fearlessly stood up to FEDECO when they wanted to play hanky-panky with his election, showing that bravado is the language desperados understand. Unfortunately, Abia State may today be witnessing a repeat of similar stories in our political space, and we can't afford to fold arms and play gentlemen to see the people's mandate brazenly hijacked by desperados from Abuja.

We have seen it all before: electoral mandates stolen from the late Prince Vincent Ogbulafori in 1999, Onyema Ugochukwu in 2007, and Dr. Alex Otti in 2015 due to the Obingwa magic. Will history repeat itself in 2027? God forbid. But given the opposition's strategy in Abia now activated in full throttle, I urge Abians not to take this threat from Abuja lightly. It is real, and it is time to take off the gloves and beat them at their game, lest we enter regret mode after their unholy abracadabra will have been pulled off.

On August 31 this year, Financial Times, an international media network, published a story titled 'Nigeria enters campaign mode with elections two years away'. The opening statement of the story goes thus: "Nigeria's politicians have plunged into campaigning for the country's 2027 general election, jostling for plum posts at the helm of Africa's most populous nation but raising eyebrows for chasing votes still two years away." Well, outsiders may raise eyebrows at the theatre of the absurd that the Nigerian politics has become, but citizens have grown accustomed to being hapless spectators to all the absurdities.

Since politics seems to have become the most lucrative enterprise in Nigeria, only true visionaries think about citizens' welfare while self-seeking politicians think only about the next election. The fact that most Nigerian politicians suffer from the pathological insanity of obsessing over the next far-away election, instead of fulfilling their present obligations, is nauseating enough. But now, guess what could be more sordid and shameful? It is the nuisance of a political desperado like a House of Representatives Deputy Speaker Benjamin Kalu abandoning his duty post in Abuja, gallivanting to Abia State every now and then, and distracting a busy governor with paranoid hyperventilation that APC will take over in 2027.

What an egregious act of political rascality and hubris. Is the position of Nigeria's House of Representatives Deputy Speaker now so ceremonial and idle that the occupant has all the time to be parading himself in his home state in the name of politics? In fact, Governor Alex Otti had barely settled down over two years ago to the business of fulfilling the mandate given him by Abia people when the desperados started ranting about APC taking over the state. They don't really care about Abia State's wellbeing; all they want is to turn the state into an APC fiefdom and become the beneficiary as governor.

In recent times, the idle, petulant irritant invaded the state again to rant about their APC's hallucinatory takeover in what now amounts to dancing naked in the marketplace. He falsely accused Governor Otti of "not doing enough" with increased revenue from federal allocations. He has turned himself into the 'auditor-general' and 'chief justice' of the state, probing and convicting the governor on baseless allegations.

So ludicrously hypocritical, arrogant, sycophantic and self-seeking, the demagogue has been throwing around the name of President Bola Tinubu to push the APC-must-take-over narrative. His real intention, however, is to grab power for himself and fellow travelers by hook or crook in order to loot and set Abia backwards to the dark past. If not an act of blackmail and an inordinate greed for power as license to loot, why would anybody in his position in Abuja be coming to Abia to attack a governor who is up and doing? And who is in the best position to pass a verdict on the governor's performance if not the Abia people who elected him and now enjoy the benefits of good governance?

Today, apart from the uncountable accolades by several credible observers who have visited Abia and seen real transformation, Ndi Abia are happy with the Otti administration's impact on their state. He has transformed the state in ways many never thought possible due to past decades of decadent misrule. Since taking office in May 2023, Governor Otti has focused on governance reforms, infrastructure development, and revitalisation of the economy and social services in Abia State. Prompt salary and pension payments, elimination of corruption, merit-based appointments, and inclusive governance are the new

order of governance.

In road construction and rehabilitation, the Otti government has undertaken major road projects in urban centres like Aba and Umuahia, and in rural areas, using a combination of direct labour and experienced contractors like Julius Berger. More than 400 roads, including Omenuko Bridge project, are either delivered or under construction across the three senatorial zones. Completed projects include the reconstruction of the Port Harcourt-Aba Road, Ohanku Road, Umuahia-Uzuakoli-Ofafia Road, and the Abam-Ndiokereke-Arochukwu Road, among several others improving connectivity across the state.

There is the Greater Aba Development Authority which the governor established as a long-term strategy for guided urban development and growth in Aba. There are modern bus terminals being constructed in Aba and Umuahia to improve transportation. Regular power supply is becoming a dream come true with the Otti government partnering and supporting the Geometric Power Plant which provides a dedicated power supply to boost industrial activities.

Healthcare is also getting quality attention from Governor Otti. For instance, major hospitals, including the Abia State University Teaching Hospital (ABSUTH) and General Hospital, Amachara, have been renovated and re-equipped. This helped ABSUTH regain its accreditation in 2023. A plan is underway to build or rehabilitate 200 primary health centres across all 17 Local Government Areas. The government has launched a Free Medical Service Initiative offering diagnostics and drug supply, and a new eye clinic was opened in Umuahia. Even more, the government has since approved the recruitment of over 700 medical experts to address manpower shortages and is prioritising the welfare of



Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti.

health workers.

Abia's future leaders are being carried along under Otti government. This year, the government introduced a policy of free and compulsory education for all children from primary school to junior secondary school (JSS3). The construction of 20 'smart schools' is underway, with newly recruited teachers deployed to public schools. The administration has implemented teacher training programmes and recruited new teachers to improve education standards, while programmes like 'TechRise' are training youths in digital skills, with the Abia Innovation and Tech Hub providing digital training and job access.

On the economic front, SMEs in Abia are enjoying solid support. The Abia Industrial Development Project has supported

small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with better access to finance and infrastructure, leading to significant growth. Investments and policies aimed at attracting both local and foreign investors have created new jobs within the state. What's more, the Abia Global Economic Advisory Council was established to help build a sustainable economic hub.

Abia State is not just doing well in all the above indices of development, it is also now one of the safest and most secure in the Southeast region. Governor Otti's security initiatives like the multi-agency security outfit 'Operation Crush', a Security Advisory Council, and the Abia Security Trust Fund have significantly reduced crime in the state. The demolition and reorganisation of the Umunneochi Cattle Market have also contributed to a major drop in crime. Above all, the state government has refurbished and provided operational vehicles to security agencies to enhance operations.

Now, the egoistic pirate and his co-travelers turn a blind eye to all the undeniable progress and unprecedented transformation being made by Governor Otti and seek to truncate it all just for him to take over and take credit. As a foremost Abia stakeholder and industrialist Dr. Uche Ogah was quoted by 'People of Abia' online blog recently, "It is only people that are made of darkness that can deny that light has come to Abia State." In other words, the forces of darkness now desperately seek to dim Abia's shining light on the altar of their selfish ambitions. If not, one wonders what new, better magic of performance the Abuja freebooter has to offer that he badmouths Governor Otti so disrespectfully and turns himself into a national disgrace to Ndi Abia? Surely, the escalating gutter antics of the rampaging raider raise alarm bells for Ndi Abia, who must be ready to resist his self-serving theatrics and sinister plans to rig himself into Umuahia Government House in 2027.

By the way, when we shift attention from petty party politics of whether Abia State should be under Labour, PDP, APGA or APC flag and focus on the personality, integrity and quality of leadership, the noisy desperado is the most unfit. The 54 years old lawmaker's journey from relative obscurity to his current unearned, undeserved Deputy Speaker status has been a public knowledge in Abia. But he has chosen to behave like the proverbial Nza bird from Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart," whose unbridled ambition leads him to fly too high and overreach himself.

Yet, another instructive proverb from "Things Fall Apart" aptly depicts their ilk: "Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble." The man was helped to his present status by a former governor of Abia State whom he has paid back with brazen ingratitude, hubris and treachery. Today, he has leveraged his position to elevate himself alone while neglecting even his direct constituency in Abia. A review of his tenure so far reveals a wide gap in tangible contributions to Bende, the constituency he represents in Abuja, despite the humongous salaries, allowances and perks he draws. This then raises the question of how he has metamorphosed into a self-styled critic of a governor who is actively doing the work of transformation.

Thus, it can be seen that the pirate's flailing attempts to vilify Governor Alex Otti emanate not from a place of concern for the state's progress but rather a hunger for power that threatens to plunge Abia back into the shadow of neglect. As earlier hinted, the desperado cloaks his ambitions with the guise of wanting to support President Bola Tinubu and the APC in their quest for electoral dominance in Abia, but this veneer falters under scrutiny. It is evident that his motivations are steeped in his own self-interest rather than genuine service to the people of Abia or even APC. His relentless opportunist forays into Abia's political space, replete with reckless threats and brash accusations, factor more into a strategy of anti-progress mischief than that of a visionary leader.

As vigilant, intelligent citizens, it is imperative that Ndi Abia remain alert to the machinations of politicking cloaked in mischief. As for the desperado, he would do well to return his attention to the duties he presently occupies in Abuja to help President Tinubu solve urgent national challenges of extreme poverty and insecurity still afflicting Nigerians, instead of continuing his nuisance to undermine a performing governor.

When 2027 comes, it is the Abia people who will decide with their votes whether Governor Otti should continue or quit, not a self-appointed messiah from Abuja. But if the push comes to shove, the incumbent governor can play the political game with gloves off. At the same time, H.E. Dr. Alex Otti as our reformer in the driver seat now is at liberty to decide on which vehicle that can take us to the Promised Land and Abians will join him. As someone well known to President Tinubu long before he became president, Governor Otti has the flexibility to play his cards. What we expect of him is a responsibility to reassure the Abia people that their mandate will be defended by all means fair and decisive, so that they are not cowed to surrender to bullying. Renegades should not be allowed to overrun the media space with their boastful grandstanding and rabid hyperventilation to unseat the governor. Neither should we play laid-back gentlemen and watch them play their hatched plans to rig the election via bribing voters, snatching ballot boxes, compromising INEC officials and unleashing violence to steal victory.

Onumere, a public affairs analyst, writes from Onitsha.

...the forces of
darkness now
desperately seek to dim
Abia's shining light on
the altar of their selfish
ambitions.



News

Abia Assembly Urges FG to Release Nnamdi Kanu on Health Grounds

By Chukwuemeka Chijioke

The Abia State House of Assembly has appealed to the Federal Government to grant the unconditional release of the detained Leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, citing his deteriorating health condition.

The call followed a motion of urgent public importance moved by the Deputy Speaker and member representing Umuahia East State Constituency, Rt. Hon. Austin Okezie Nmerigini, during Tuesday's plenary. The motion, titled "The Precarious State of Health of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu," also urged the Federal Government to allow him immediate access to proper medical care at the National Hospital, Abuja.

Nmerigini noted that the Assembly has both a constitutional and moral duty to safeguard the right to life and ensure humane treatment for all Nigerians. He appealed to Governor Alex Otti (OFR) to continue engaging other South East governors and relevant authorities toward a just and compassionate resolution of Kanu's case.

The Deputy Speaker further urged South East lawmakers and Ohanaeze Ndigbo to sustain peaceful dialogue with the Federal Government, stressing that justice, fairness, and humanity remain vital for peace and stability in the region.

Judiciary Staff Hold Road Walk to Promote Fitness, Wellness

By Chinyere Nwachukwu

Staff and stakeholders in the Abia State Judiciary today turned out in large numbers for their regular road walk aimed at promoting fitness and workplace wellness.

Addressing participants after the exercise, the State Chief Judge, Justice Lilian Abai, expressed satisfaction with the turnout despite the short notice, and urged members of the judiciary to continue participating in the exercise for their overall well-being.

The Administrative Judge of Ohafia Judicial Division, Justice K.C.J. Okereke, commended the resumption of the programme in the spirit of the Legal Year Week. He appreciated the Chief Judge for her sustained commitment to the initiative, which he said fosters unity and good health among judicial officers and staff.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the Magistrates' Association of Nigeria (MAN), Mr. Nnaemeka Orji; Dr. Emmanuel Esiaba, DCR Special Duties, Customary Court of Appeal; Mrs. Nkwachi Onwutuebe, DCR High Court; and Magistrate Uzor Onuoha, coordinator of the exercise, described the programme as a laudable innovation introduced by the Chief Judge to enhance staff health and morale.

In separate interviews, some participants including the State JUSUN Secretary, Mr. Chibueze Nwachukwu, and Mrs. Ogechi Harrison, described the road walk as exciting and refreshing. They called for its regularization, noting that those who missed it "have missed a lot."

Abia Govt to Flag Off Construction of 25km Umuahia-Ikot Ekpene Road Next Week

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

The Abia State Government will next week Friday flag off the construction of the 25-kilometre Umuahia-Ikot Ekpene Road and the 13.1-kilometre Ariam-Usaka Ring Road in Ikwoano Local Government Area.

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kanu, disclosed this while briefing journalists on the outcome of this week's Executive Council meeting presided over by Governor Alex Otti.

He added that other road projects lined up for flag-off at a later date include the 9.35km Ihechiowa-Arochukwu Ring Road, the 4.9km Isieketa-Mbaitungwa-Mgbedeala



Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kanu.

Road, and the 3.72km Avo Umuogidi-Umuala Eziam Ntigha Road in Isiala Ngwa North Local Government Area.

Prince Kanu explained that the projects are part of the state government's strategic efforts to open up rural communities, boost economic activities, and enhance connectivity across Abia.

"These roads, when completed, will open up those corridors to further development and

business opportunities in the state," he stated.

The Commissioner also announced that Abia State will join the rest of the world on October 15 to mark this year's World Food Day at the International Conference Centre, Umuahia.

He noted that the global celebration, themed "Hand in Hand for Better Food and a Better Future," underscores the need for collaboration in building sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food systems.

Prince Kanu urged stakeholders — including higher institutions, development partners, and local communities to work together to end hunger, improve nutrition, and secure a better future for all.

Abia SSG Commends Financial Inclusion CDS for Enlightenment Visit

By Gideon Akinrujumu

The Secretary to the Abia State Government (SSG), Professor Kenneth Kalu, has expressed appreciation to the Financial Inclusion CDS Group for their visit and impactful lecture on investment and financial literacy. He described the engagement as a commendable step toward promoting financial inclusion and improving the economic well-being of Abia citizens.

Professor Kalu thanked the team for their enthusiasm and commitment, assuring them of the government's continued support for initiatives that empower citizens financially. He emphasized that the administration remains dedicated to guiding residents on maximizing available financial opportunities, adding that the state will sustain efforts to expand financial inclusion and strengthen partnerships that foster economic growth.

Meanwhile, the President of the Financial Inclusion Community Development Service (CDS) Group in Abia State, Erhiawarie Jesutevwe Blessing, has emphasized the importance of financial literacy and strategic investment as key drivers of financial security.

He disclosed this while delivering a lecture on "Investment" at the Office of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Abia State.

The event organized by the Staff

Welfare Department of the SSG's Office. The CDS President was accompanied by the Vice President, Ayinde Christiana Dolapo.

Erhiawarie highlighted the need for individuals to understand the fundamentals of money management, savings, and investment planning.

He outlined various forms of investment including business ventures, real assets such as land and housing, stocks and bonds, agricultural projects, and personal development through education and skill acquisition.

In his words: "Your location and the type of investment you want to make matter. Investment is not one-size-fits-all; it should be guided by your capacity and circumstances."

He urged participants to evaluate their financial strengths and risk

tolerance before investing, asking reflective questions such as: "What kind of risk-taker am I? Do I have the patience to wait for returns? Will this investment threaten my livelihood?"

Erhiawarie further advised that investments should only be made within one's financial capacity to avoid undue hardship.

The interactive session featured active participation, with attendees posing questions and receiving practical guidance. The organizers commended the CDS President and his Vice President for their insightful and impactful presentation.

In appreciation, staff members expressed gratitude for the enlightenment and pledged to apply the knowledge gained, assuring that positive results would follow from adopting wise investment practices.



President of Financial Inclusion CDS, Erhiawarie Jesutevwe Blessing (5th from left), Vice President Ayinde Christiana Dolapo (4th from left), along with other dignitaries during the Corps Members' CDS inspection in Umuahia North.



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FOREVER IN OUR *Hearts*

With sorrowful hearts but
with the hope of
resurrection, the family of
Late Professor Innocent
Okoronye Esq,
announces the death of
their Husband,
Father, uncle and brother



LATE PROFESSOR **INNOCENT OKORONYE ESQ**

BURIAL ARRANGEMENTS

FRIDAY 31ST OCTOBER 2025

**8:00AM: BODY LEAVES CITY GATE MORTUARY UMUACHIA TO HIS HOMETOWN
UMUACHA, UMUOBI AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY, EZIAMA NNEATO
UMUNNEOCHI LGA, ABIA STATE**

12:00PM: FUNERAL DISCOURSE BY JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

1:00PM: INTERMENT AT HIS COMPOUND

**SIGNED
IKECHUKWU CHARLES OKORONYE (SON) FOR THE FAMILY**

Joseph Jacob
JosephJACOB1914
070361698671



Creative Writers Hangout

Uche and the Sword (8)

The third term examination commenced, the J3 students were writing their Junior School Certificate Exams while other classes were writing their third term exams.

Previously, the J.S.3 students used to write theirs first, but the strike action by teachers had made all the exams to be holding simultaneously.

Sandra went to spend the night with Nkeiru so they could study together and exchange ideas.

"Why are you so sure that you will emerge tops this term as to win the Principal's prize?" Sandra asked Nkeiru.

"Because I'm sure of myself"

"But you have not been reading your books seriously."

"Sandra, my sister, reading is not studying. When the chips are down we shall know who is studying hard, but mark it somewhere, I'll emerge the best student." Nkeiru boasted as she lay down on the bed. Sandra started reading alone. But, from time to time Nkeiru would urge Sandra to come and sleep. At a point Sandra reasoned that Nkeiru had never cared for her to sleep as she was doing that night. Something was wrong she thought. Sandra yawned left the books and lay beside Nkeiru, who put off the light. Few minutes later Sandra started snoring.

Nkeiru nudged her severely, but Sandra went on snoring. Nkeiru felt sure that Sandra had slept; she picked up her phone and dialed a number.

About ten minutes later someone tapped on the window, Nkeiru quickly opened the window and leaped out. Sandra sat up when she heard a male voice speaking with Nkeiru.

"Sword, why did you want to see me?" The boy asked.

"Sword, I want you to help me persuade the Grand Master to award the biggest mark to me" Nkeiru whispered.

"Sword, Julie told Grand Master in the last meeting that she will give N80,000.00 for the highest mark. You know this thing is a matter of the highest bidder," the male voice said.

Sandra left the bed and went closer to the window to eavesdrop.

"Sword, I've been a loyal member, I've carried out various assignments, which have tested and proved my loyalty to the Sword."

"Sword, this is not a matter of how long or how loyal you have been, but how much you can offer. I know you have tried but if you do not beat Julie she's likely to get the biggest mark in the continuous assessment"

"I'll beat her, sword, I'll come with N100,000 when we meet on Friday. Please I'll want you to

keep the Principal's stamp.

"Why? The Grand master gave it to you"

"Yes you see Sandra have been spending the night with me since the exams commenced so she could make use of some of my text books she doesn't have. I don't want her to see the stamp, you know, she's in good terms with Uche"

"O.K. go and bring it"

Sandra scurried into the bed and started her snoring.

"Sandra, Sandra"

Nkeiru called to make sure that Sandra was sleeping. When Sandra kept on snoring she opened her ward-robe and took the stamp from the window

"Good night Sword"

"Good night" the males said.

Nkeiru locked the window and came back to bed.

"They called themselves sword, they have a Grand Master and they are in possession of the Principal's stamp. So Uche might be innocent, after all." These thoughts did not let Sandra sleep. Her conscience troubled her for the harsh way she turned Uche off when he wanted to tell her his own side of the story.

The next day after her exams Sandra hung around to see Uche. Immediately Uche came out from the hall, he saw her, before he could dodge, Sandra called him.

"Uche come here!"

Uche was annoyed with Sandra. He had vowed not to talk to her again. But as she called him, he could not resist going to her, to unburden his heart to her. He needed her cozy encouragement and support now than ever.

As he started going towards her, Sandra also started coming. She took his hand and led him to a Mango tree shed.

"Good morning Senior." Uche greeted, pulling out his hand. He was very shy of Sandra holding him.

"How are you Uche?"

He kept silent and kept his eyes on his hands.

"Are you annoyed with me?"

"Not really, I don't want people to associate you with a thief."

"Uche please I'm sorry. Please tell me what happened. I am suspecting something. Your side of the story may help us find the Principal's stamp."

Uche's eyes radiate with hope and smile came to his face. He happily told her all he could remember that happened that night. Sandra told him the strange thing that happened the previous night. She also warned him seriously not to let the cat out of the bag. After that discussion the separated friends became united again.

They trekked home together brainstorming on what to do. "I

wonder where they will be meeting on Friday?" Sandra asked.

"It may be in the school" Uche suggested.

"I thought of that, but Trouble will not let anybody inside the school"

"You're right. But, what if you tell Nkeiru that you'll spend

CITATIONS INSPIRANTES

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies....The man who never reads lives only one."

- George R. R Martin, American writer.

Friday's night with her?"

"She'll never agree. But, I'll try it. She may mistakenly tell me where she'll be going on Friday's night" Sandra said. They walked along in silence before Sandra broke the silence, "Uche be ready on Friday we may have to attend that meeting with them."

During break on Thursday Sandra spoke with Nkeiru. "Nkeiru, how are you doing? You've been very quiet today. Is something troubling you?" Sandra asked as she placed her hand on Nkeiru's shoulder

Nkeiru sighed, "Money! I need N100,000 before Friday's night." she stopped abruptly when she recollected herself "Forget about that. How's your boyfriend?"

"Who's that?" Sandra asked pretending not to know that she was referring to Uche.

"Uche now,"

"He's fine"

"He's neat nowadays and his eczemas have all gone"

"Thanks Nkeiru for seeing that. Iron sharpens iron and if you associate with wise ones you'll become wise"

"You're right Sandra, your friendship have greatly changed him."

"Thank you Nkeiru for improving me academically too."

"What do you mean, Sandra"

"I'm grateful for allowing me spend some nights with you. Those your textbooks I read have helped me a lot"

"You're always welcomed" Nkeiru said happily.

"Please, can I come and spend the night with you tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow, tomorrow that's Friday?"

"Yes"

Sandra noticed the change in Nkeiru's face. Sandra held her breath as she awaits Nkeiru's response.

Nkeiru burst into laughter, "I am sorry, I didn't tell you. I'll be going to Enugu with my parents after school tomorrow"

Sandra was disappointed but she forced a smile. "No problem. May be next week"

"Yes, I'll even want you to

come throughout next week so that we can read everything ahead of each day's exams"

"There's no problem. Let's stroll around before our next paper" Sandra suggested. As they strolled around, Sandra was enveloped in the thought of what next to do.

After the day's exams, Sandra met Uche and told him Nkeiru's response. In a tears laden voice Uche asked, "What can we do?"

"I don't know", Sandra replied helplessly.

"Next week is the last week if I fail to find the stamp the police will arrest me" Uche lamented.

"Uche, that is why we need to do something. We must think and think fast."

They remained silent for more than twenty minutes as they thought of what to do "Senior! Senior!" Uche called while Sandra remained silent. When she finally spoke she said, "How many times have I told you not to call me senior whenever school is over?"

"I am sorry. Sandra"

"What did you want to say?"

"Since the boy came through the window, Nkeiru's parents are not aware of what is happening"

"Yes, you're right"

"What if we look for somewhere, around her house, where we can hide. She'll certainly come out through the window to attend the meeting, then we'll trail her?"

"You're right!" Sandra exclaimed, "You'll make a good detective"

They agreed to meet at the bush behind Nkeiru's house at 9pm.

On Friday morning Sandra's stepmother came back from school, she was studying Medicine in the university. Whenever she comes back Sandra would be in trouble, as the woman hated Sandra so much.

Sandra's mum died when giving birth to her, so she did not know her mother. Her father, Felix married Adaku three years later. Since then Sandra had grown up to know Adaku as someone that hated her rather than a loving step-mother.

Sandra had twin stepbrothers Emma and Sunday, who are five years younger than her. Whenever Adaku was in school Sandra assumes the role of the mother. No wonder at just fifteen she had learnt a lot in home keeping.

In the evening Sandra went to the Parlor where her father and his wife were watching T.V.

"Daddy please, I want to spend tonight at Nkeiru's place. Our last paper is Mathematics coming up on Monday. I want Nkeiru to teach me some

important topics"

Her father was about to open his mouth when Adaku took over, "You're going nowhere. Go to your room and sleep"

"But Mummy..." Sandra started

"Shut up Sandra, get into your room", Adaku yelled.

"Well Sandra you've heard what your mum said" her father finally said sheepishly. Sandra went into her room and wept till around 8.30pm. An idea came to her. She locked her room and left through the window.

Uche on his part was restless. How could he leave the house? He sleeps in the parlor; leaving the house will mean leaving the front door open. Moreover, it would be around 11 pm that Asonye and Kate were likely to leave the parlor for their bedroom.

He realized that he would not sleep in the house if he must leave by 9pm. But, what could he do to make him sleep outside? "I must do something" he thought. As he entered the Kitchen he saw Ifeoma.

"Uche stone head", Ifeoma started, "the only thing you know is food"

Uche gave her a mild slap, but she charged at him crying to the top of her voice. As they were struggling Kate came in with broom and started flogging Uche

"Idiot! Idiot! Don't you know she's your senior?" Kate asked as she hit Uche with the broom. Uche grabbed the opportunity, dashed out of the house and headed towards Nkeiru's house.

The street were dark, the cloudy sky prevented the moon from shining. As he ran Uche made use of the headlights of cars passing-by to find his way. When he got to their planned hideout, an uncompleted building surrounded by bush, Uche called Sandra, but there was no response. He squatted at a corner eagerly expecting Sandra.

It was when a cool breeze brushed his arm that he realized that he was not well dressed for the task ahead. He was putting on knickers and a short sleeved shirt. He realized that he would likely catch cold and be feasted on by mosquitoes.

About forty minutes later Uche saw a torch light coming, he peered and saw a silhouette of a boy coming, his heart started pounding. The person was coming towards him. Uche buried his face in his hands and waited for what the person might do to him.

What will happen to Uche? Who is coming to meet him? Will he be killed? Find out in our next publication.

Sporting Ambassador

AMBASSADOR
With Jacob Joseph



Liverpool, Man Utd in Crunch League Clash

Manchester United will storm Anfield this weekend in search of their first back-to-back league victory since Ruben Amorim took charge at Old Trafford.

In their last league match before the international break, United defeated Sunderland 2-0, and a victory at Anfield will be highly desirable. However, facing Liverpool, who surrendered their lead on the league table to Arsenal after suffering back-to-back defeats to Crystal Palace and Chelsea — will be a tough challenge for the Red Devils.

Arne Slot and his boys will be determined to avoid a fourth consecutive defeat. Recall that Victor Osimhen converted a penalty to help Galatasaray defeat the Reds in a Champions League Group Phase encounter. Liverpool will also be eager not to lose further ground to Arsenal, who

currently lead the Premier League table.

Other fixtures will see Nottingham Forest welcome Chelsea, while Brighton take on Newcastle United at the Amex Stadium.

Turf Moor will be the battleground between Burnley and Leeds United, as Crystal Palace and Bournemouth clash at Selhurst Park.

Pep Guardiola's Manchester City will host Everton, while Sunderland will trade tackles with Tolu Arokodare's Wolves at the Stadium of Light.

The Nigerian trio of Calvin Bassey, Alex Iwobi, and Samuel Chukwueze will aim to stop Arsenal when Fulham host the table-toppers at Craven Cottage.

Tottenham Hotspur and Aston Villa will lock horns on Sunday, just before the super clash between Liverpool and Manchester United.



Enyimba International

NPFL: Enyimba, Warriors Battle Wolves, Shooting Stars

Week Nine matches of the Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL) will take place this weekend, with Enyimba International of Aba hosting Warri Wolves, while Abia Warriors will storm Ibadan to take on Shooting Stars.

Encounters between both clubs are always explosive and tight. The last time they met in the league was during the 2020/2021 season, with both fixtures ending in 1-1 draws.

The People's Elephant are not expected to drop points in this encounter despite the anticipated

difficulty of the match.

Abia Warriors, on their part, will travel to Ibadan to confront Shooting Stars at the Lekan Salami Stadium. When both teams met last season, the Oluyole Warriors recorded a 2-0 victory. However, Abia Warriors are now better and more experienced, and are therefore expected to get a stronger result this time.

In other fixtures, Niger Tornadoes will host Plateau United, while Kwara United will battle Katsina United.

The Sani Abacha Stadium is expected to be filled to the brim

when the first Kano Derby of the season takes place between Barua FC and Kano Pillars.

Bayelsa United will welcome Kun Khalifat, while El-Kanemi Warriors face Wikki Tourists. The Onikan Stadium will host the clash between Ikorodu City and Nasarawa United.

Meanwhile, the fixtures between Remo Stars and Enugu Rangers, and Bendel Insurance against Rivers United, will not hold this weekend due to the continental engagements of Remo Stars and Rivers United.



MEN UNDER PRESSURE: Arne Slot and Ruben Amorim

CAF Champions League: Remo Stars Battle Sundowns

Nigerian champions, Remo Stars, will have their hands full this weekend when they host South African champions, Mamelodi Sundowns, in the first leg of the second preliminary round of the CAF Champions League.

To qualify for this stage, Remo Stars whitewashed Zilimadjou of Comoros 5-0 on aggregate. Recall that both matches were played at the MKO Abiola International Stadium, Abuja.

It will, however, be a different scenario this time, as the return leg against the South Africans will take place at the Loftus Versfeld Stadium in Pretoria, South Africa. Therefore, Remo Stars must

endeavour to secure a convincing result at home.

The other Nigerian representative in the competition, Rivers United, will travel to Maputo to take on Mozambican side, Black Bulls. The Port Harcourt-based team reached this stage of the competition after eliminating Aigles du Congo with a lone-goal aggregate victory.

If the Nigerian teams progress beyond this stage, they will qualify for the lucrative group stage of the competition. Enyimba International of Aba remain the only Nigerian side to have won the CAF Champions League — a feat they achieved back-to-back in 2003 and 2004.



Celebration Time: Remo Stars players celebrating a goal

FIFA U-17 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP: Flamingoes Battle For Glory

The eighth edition of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup will take place in Morocco from October 17 to November 8, with Nigeria's U-17 women's team, the Flamingoes, aiming to reach the final for the first time — and possibly lift the coveted trophy.

The team's best performance came in the 2022 edition, where they finished third.

This year's event is historic, as it will be the first time an African country Morocco — is hosting the competition. Expectations are high across the continent as fans hope to see an African team finally claim the title.

For the first time, 24 teams will compete for supremacy. Africa will be represented by five teams, including host Morocco. Asia and South

America will each present four teams, Europe will have five, while two teams will feature from the Oceania Confederation.

In Group A, hosts Morocco will face Brazil, Italy, and Costa Rica. Group B features defending champions North Korea alongside Mexico, Cameroon, and the Netherlands.

In Group C, the United States will battle Ecuador, China, and Norway, while

Nigeria will confront Canada, France, and Samoa in Group D.

The most successful side in the history of the competition, Spain, will play in Group E against Colombia, South Korea, and Ivory Coast. Meanwhile, Group F will see Japan, New Zealand, Zambia, and Paraguay fight for qualification to the knockout stage.



Abia's 1st International Para Badminton Championship: Nigerian Players Shine

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

The first Abia International Para Badminton Championship has ended, with Nigeria's Paralympic bronze medallist, Eniola Bolaji, emerging champion in the Women's Singles SL3 category.

The tournament, which concluded recently at the International Conference Centre, Umuahia, saw Bolaji—ranked second globally in the SL3 category by the Para World Badminton Federation—defeating Cameroon's Danyele Mouafo 2-0 (21-7, 21-3) to claim the top prize.

In the Men's Singles SL4 category, Nigeria's Jeremiah Nnanna, Africa's number one in that class, outclassed his compatriot Yahaya Ayuba 2-0 (21-9, 21-8) to secure gold. Mary Nathan added gold for Nigeria after beating Brazil's Juscileia Silva 2-1 (5-21, 21-18, 21-17) in the Women's Singles WH1 event.

Nigeria finished with three gold, four silver, and nine bronze medals, placing fourth on the medals table. Nigeria's silver medallists included Jeremiah Nnanna, Obinna Nwosu, Chinyere Okoro, Yahaya Ayuba, and Ijeoma Chukwuemeka.

Brazil topped the medals table with seven gold, three silver, and five bronze medals, followed by India with six gold, five silver, and 14 bronze. Peru came third with six gold, three silver, and two bronze.

A total of 114 players from 14 countries competed in 19 sporting events. Participating countries included Brazil, India, Peru, Egypt,



Gov. Alex Otti exchanging pleasantries with some of the players

Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, DR Congo, Mauritius, Mozambique, and host nation Nigeria.

Speaking at the closing ceremony—which also marked the opening of the All Africa Para Badminton Championship, Governor Alex Otti congratulated the winners and commended all participants.

Governor Otti described the

championship as "the first of its kind in Nigeria and in West Africa," reaffirming his administration's commitment to inclusiveness and empowerment for persons living with disabilities.

"I want to congratulate those that won awards and medals in this competition—the first of its kind, I'm told, in Nigeria, even in West Africa. For us in Abia State, our mantra is inclusion. And that's one of the reasons why we offered to host you. If you are anywhere and you don't pay attention to inclusion, then you are not getting it right," the Governor said.

The Governor drew inspiration from the story of John Faulkner, a limless motivational speaker, and challenged the athletes to always give their best regardless of their circumstances or physical condition.

"You have no excuse not to do what others are doing; and for us in leadership, we have no excuse not to provide opportunities for people who are born with one little problem or challenges. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure that you have come and demonstrated that these little challenges will not stop you from participating in sports," he added.

Governor Otti also revealed that Abia State's request to host the

second edition of the championship has been approved. He further announced a \$50,000 support package for participating countries, to be disbursed through the State Ministry of Youth and Sports Development.

In their separate remarks, the Chief Executive Officer of the Badminton Confederation of Africa, Mr. Jeff Shingoli, and the President of the Badminton Federation of Nigeria, Mr. Francis Orbih, commended Abia State and Nigeria for hosting the historic championship.

In his address, the Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Mr. Nwaobilor Ananaba, noted that under Governor Otti's leadership, Abia is fast becoming a destination for sports tourism and international sporting excellence.

The Commissioner lauded Governor Otti for his vision, unwavering support, and provision of the necessary resources that ensured the success of the event, adding that the Governor has once again demonstrated that sports play a vital role in promoting inclusion, unity, and development.

"Governor Otti's vision and unwavering support have indeed, made this dream come true. Through the provision of world-class

facilities, including Nigeria's first wheelchair para badminton mats, access to transport, local flights, and other logistics, His Excellency has demonstrated once again that sports are instrumental to inclusion, unity, and growth. As we close this historic first edition, we open another—the All Africa Para Badminton Games—which begins tomorrow. It is a powerful reminder that sports never stop, and that Abia is becoming a destination for sports tourism and international excellence," Ananaba noted.

In a vote of thanks, the Second Vice President and National Coordinator of the Badminton Federation of Nigeria, Mr. Ekeoma Samuel, commended Governor Otti for making history as the first Governor in West Africa to host an international para badminton event.

He noted that the mats used for the tournament were the first wheelchair-accessible badminton mats in West Africa, procured by the Abia State Government. He also thanked the Governor for providing a wheelchair-accessible bus for persons with disabilities.

"Your Excellency, you are the only Governor that has produced a wheelchair-accessible bus that can carry persons with disabilities without dehumanisation. On this note, we are proud of you," he stated.

SUDOKU

Puzzle By: Prince Blessing Lazarus

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

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.