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NATIONAL Ambassador

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"Uplift the people, project the nation"

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Gov Otti Warns Nigeria To Reduce Reliance On Crude Oil... Delivers 37th Convocation Lecture Of FUTO

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti, has warned that Nigeria risks a future of "guaranteed anarchy", if it fails to reduce its dependence on crude oil.

Governor Otti gave the warning while delivering the 37th Convocation Lecture of the Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), titled, "Economic Development and Sustainability: Beyond Oil, Exploring Alternative Revenue Potential for Economic Growth and Sustainable Development in Nigeria".

The governor said that Nigeria must urgently embrace alternative revenue sources, backed by strong political will, institutional reforms and large-scale investment in human capital in order to secure long term stability.

He argued that Nigeria's over-reliance on oil has crippled innovation, weakened tax systems, stifled other high-potential sectors, and repeatedly derailed development plans that looked promising on paper.

Governor Otti cautioned that a sudden collapse of oil revenue would throw many states into turmoil adding that what follows would be guaranteed anarchy.

"The objective assessment, a position Usman et al also share, is that without oil revenue, government operations in several states and local governments would come to a grinding halt. If that happens, what follows is guaranteed anarchy".

He attributed Nigeria's persistent development failures not to a shortage of ideas, but to "policy inconsistency, executive indecision and lack of political will", citing Vision 20:2020, the National Industrial Revolution Plan, the Agricultural Transformation Agenda and the ERGP as examples of under-implemented

programmes.

Governor Otti who lamented that Nigeria's GDP per capita "fell from \$1,820 to \$807 in 2025" despite decades of ambitious plans, added that the country's tax-to-GDP ratio remains below the African average and called for a complete overhaul of the

revenue architecture.

"The tax system in the Country is largely inefficient and dysfunctional. The reason stems from the absence of sufficient knowledge of the power of tax to transform an economy", Governor Otti stated.

The Governor cited Abia's

tax reforms as proof that a trust-based model works, insisting that taxation must be repositioned as "a major instrument of development and not a tool of punitive control".

He recalled that his administration suspended informal sector tax collections for six months in 2023 and

prioritised service delivery.

The governor disclosed that entrepreneurs in Abia, now voluntarily pay taxes, "to appreciate the work that is being done", adding that Abia was recently ranked among States with the best fiscal performance for the first time.

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Governor Alex Otti of Abia presenting the posthumous award conferred by the school on the Late Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu to his wife, Dr. (Mrs.) Chinyere Onu, during the 22nd Convocation Ceremony of Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba, held at the Polytechnic Pavilion.

Abia Govt, SEDC Move To Boost Agric Rural Development

By Ebere Tasie

The Abia State Ministry of Agriculture, recently, hosted a high-level team from the South East Development Commission (SEDC) to discuss how both parties can work together to improve agriculture and rural development in the state.

The delegation was led by Executive Director for Natural Resources,

Agriculture and Rural Development (NRARD). Dr. Cliff Ogbede, he said the visit is in line with the commission's goal of speeding up development in the South East. He also noted that the SEDC, which was launched on January 11, 2025, by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, was created to tackle major development challenges in the region.

Dr. Ogbede praised Governor Alex Otti's reforms

in agriculture and said the commission is ready to support the state. He added that the SEDC plans to partner with Abia to develop farm estates in the three senatorial districts through improved road access, technical support, and shared funding. This will help upgrade agricultural facilities and increase productivity.

In his response, the Commissioner for

Agriculture, Dr. Cliff Agbaeze, restated the government's commitment to rebuilding the agricultural sector.

He said the administration is working hard to bridge development gaps and continue the legacy of great leaders like Dr. Michael Okpara and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who promoted agricultural growth in the region.

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Fubara Expresses Confidence In Chief Of Naval Staff

From: Nzeuzo Jane, Ph

Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State has expressed strong confidence in the ability of the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), Vice Admiral Idi Abbas, and the Nigerian Navy to enhance security across the state's waterways.

The governor gave the assurance recently, when the Naval Chief paid him a courtesy visit at the Government House, Port Harcourt.

Fubara congratulated Vice Admiral Abbas on his recent appointment, describing it as well-deserved and a recognition of his proven record of excellence and service. He noted that the Navy's advanced technology, skilled manpower, and tactical competence are essential to safeguarding Rivers State's extensive marine corridor.

"We need to work together for us to succeed," the governor said, emphasising that collaboration remains the most effective strategy for protecting residents, assets, and the environment.

Highlighting Rivers State's strategic importance as a hub for Nigeria's crude oil and coastal infrastructure, Governor Fubara commended the Navy for its sustained efforts in preventing losses to lives, livelihoods, and the ecosystem. He assured Vice Admiral Abbas of the state government's continued cooperation and support.

In his remarks, the Chief of Naval Staff said his visit was part of a nationwide tour to assess operational readiness across naval formations since assuming office on October 30, 2025. He noted that Rivers State hosts several critical energy installations that fall under the Navy's protection mandate, as well as key units vital to its training operations.

Vice Admiral Abbas commended the state government for its consistent support, citing the provision of six gunboats and the donation of a school building as notable interventions that have enhanced operational effectiveness. He called for sustained collaboration as the Navy intensifies efforts to secure the nation's maritime domain.

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EDITORIAL:

Nigeria's New Envoys And The Demanding Road Ahead

News

Gov Otti Warns Nigeria To Reduce Reliance On Crude Oil

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He also criticised decades of neglect in the solid minerals sector, noting that Nigeria's deposits, valued at an estimated \$750 billion have been left to illegal miners and criminal syndicates.

"Our nation may continue to fall short of its revenue target if the precious metals mined here are smuggled into neighbouring countries and sold in the black market with the proceeds going into the pockets of non-state actors", he said.

The governor further noted that despite decades of Agricultural Programmes, 30.6 million Nigerians still face acute food insecurity.

He noted that, in the meantime, the most realistic National Goal in Agriculture is to "ramp up output to be able to feed the population, fight the menace of hunger and create certain categories of jobs," stressing that improved productivity must be treated as an urgent priority.

Governor Otti highlighted Abia's efforts to revive Palm, Rubber and Cashew Plantations, support for small holder farmers and partner with research institutions such as Michael Okpara University of Agriculture and NRCRI Umudike.

The Governor who emphasised that Nigeria's most valuable asset is not oil or minerals, but its people said, "the biggest resource advantage for our country is not what is buried in the ground, it is in the minds of its over 200 million people."

He noted that sustainable development requires education, innovation and a well-trained workforce capable of extracting value from other sectors and highlighted that his administration allocates 20% of its annual budget to Education and 15 per cent to Health.

The governor said that the selfish orientation of the present generation has stolen the voices that could have pushed for a better deal for every member of the society and urged Nigerians to rediscover the community-before-self ethos of earlier generations and develop a national mindset that supports accountability, shared responsibility and sustainable economic growth.

Earlier in her remarks, the Vice-Chancellor of FUTO, Prof. Nnennaya Otti, expressed appreciation to Governor Otti for honouring the institution with his presence and delivering the 37th Convocation Lecture.

The convocation lecture also featured the presentation of a commemorative plaque of the institution's motto, "Technology for Service," to Governor Otti by the vice-chancellor and a special presentation in appreciation of the Governor's outstanding contributions to education and development by the leadership of the Institution's Student Union Government

The Deputy Governor, Ikechukwu Emetu, Chief of Staff to the Governor, Pastor Caleb Ajagba, SSG, Prof Kenneth Kalu, member representing Ikwuano/Umuahia Federal Constituency, Hon Obi Aguocha, Senator Darlington Nwokocha, Members of the Abia State Executive Council, as well as the General Manager, Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Hon Jones Ike, were among dignitaries who attended the event.

Abia Govt, SEDC Move To Boost Agric Rural Development

Continued from page 1

Dr. Agbaeze explained that the state's plan focuses on improving existing farm plantations instead of acquiring new land. This, he said, will strengthen relationships with host communities and support inclusive development.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Mrs. Ijeoma Adanna Aguwa, welcomed the delegation and promised full co-operation. The State Director of Lands, Mong Uduma, also assured them of technical support from the Ministry of Lands.

Officials present at the meeting included: Dr. Cliff Agbaeze, - Commissioner for Agriculture

Mrs. Ijeoma Adanna Aguwa, - Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture

Dr. Ojo Uma Ojo - State Director of Agriculture; Mong Uduma - State Director of Lands

Samuel O. Titilaye - Representative, Acting Surveyor-General; Ucheibe A. O. - Community Liaison Office; Ikpa Kelech U. - Principal Land Officer

SEDC Delegation: Dr. Cliff Ogbede - Executive Director, NRARD; Dr. Charles Ajah - Consultant Amb. Dr. Timothy Ihemadu - Consultant; Mr. Nnamdi Umunakwe - Programme Officer; Mr. Olugbenga Fashola - Programme Officer

The visit represents an important step toward building a strong partnership that will help position Abia State as a leading center for modern and sustainable agriculture in the South East.

FG Will Confront Terrorists, Restore Order - Ribadu, Musa

From Sophina Ovuike, Abuja

The National Security Adviser (NSA), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, and the newly sworn-in Minister of Defence, General Christopher Musa (retd), have assured Nigerians that the Federal Government is committed to decisively confronting terrorists, restoring order, and ensuring lasting peace across the country.

Ribadu issued the warning in Abuja at a dialogue on the whole-of-

society approach to preventing violence and conflict in Northern Nigeria, organised by the National Peace Committee, The Kukah Centre, and the Office of the National Security Adviser.

He said Nigeria has recorded 775 terrorism-related convictions, stressing that each conviction "represents a life restored and a community

stabilised." Ribadu warned that anyone attempting to undermine national security would face coordinated action.

The NSA Chief added that sustainable peace required translating dialogue into actionable steps that build trust and strengthen community resilience. He emphasised that Nigeria remains the only functioning democracy in

the Sahel and must be protected.

Ribadu noted that most security challenges originate from local issues and urged traditional rulers, religious leaders, community heads, and state governments to take stronger roles in preventing violence. "Nigeria desires peace. Our people deserve peace. With sincerity and shared responsibility, we can build a stable and united society," he said.

Tinubu Receives Letters Of Credence From 21 New Envoys

From Sophina Ovuike, Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has received Letters of Credence from 21 newly accredited foreign envoys at the State House, Abuja, reaffirming Nigeria's commitment to strengthening diplomatic ties and promoting global peace and prosperity.

The ceremony, held at the Council Chamber, recently, featured 17 ambassadors and four high commissioners who officially assumed their roles as representatives of their respective countries.

This was disclosed in a statement by the Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Mr. Bayo Onanuga.

In his remarks, President Tinubu welcomed the diplomats and pledged Nigeria's readiness to deepen co-operation across key sectors, including trade, energy, agriculture, technology, education, defence, and cultural exchange.

"On behalf of the government and people of

Nigeria, I warmly welcome you to the State House and congratulate you on your appointments. Nigeria values its longstanding friendships and strategic partnerships," the President stated.

He noted that the presentation of credentials symbolized the renewal of mutual commitment between Nigeria and the envoys' home countries, especially at a time the world faces increasing security, climate, and economic challenges.

"The global community faces evolving issues—security threats, climate pressures, economic instability, and humanitarian concerns. Nigeria stands ready to work closely with your governments to address these challenges and build a more stable and prosperous world," Tinubu affirmed.

He assured the diplomats of his administration's full cooperation, adding that his

doors remain open for constructive dialogue throughout their tenure.

Speaking on behalf of the envoys, the Ambassador of Japan, Mr. Suzuki Hideo, described the event as historic and commended Nigeria's strategic influence within ECOWAS and on the African continent.

"We are honoured and filled with gratitude to have presented our Letters of Credence today. Nigeria's leadership in promoting economic growth and political stability in West Africa continues to earn global recognition," the Japanese envoy said.

List of newly Accredited Envoys Ambassadors:

Suzuki Hideo - Japan; Brah Mahamad - Chad; Rodolf Estime Lekogo - Gabon; Mehmet Poroy - Türkiye; Muhannad M.A. Alhammouri - State of Palestine; Felix Costales Artioda - Spain; Banbang Suharto - Indonesia; Ba Abdoulaye Mamadou - Mauritania; Peter

Guschelbauer - Austria; Thirapath Mongkolnavin - Thailand; Anna Westerholm - Sweden. Others are; Tomas Vyprachticky - Czech Republic; John Ballout Jr. - Liberia; Michal Cygan - Poland; Roberto Mengoni - Italy; Martins Podostavek - Slovak Republic and Gholamreza Mahdavi Raja - Iran.

High Commissioners are: Miah M.D. Mainul Kabir - Bangladesh; Baba Jamal Mohammed Ahmad - Ghana; Abhesh Singh - India; Juliette Bynoe Sutherland - Barbados

The envoys are expected to begin diplomatic engagements immediately, focusing on strengthening bilateral ties and advancing mutually beneficial cooperation.

Reconciliation of Name

This is to affirm that Ozo-Michael Nkechinyere which appeared in my National Identification Number (NIN) and Michael Ozo Nkechinyere which appeared in my Bank Verification Number (BVN) are same person. I now wish to be known and addressed as OZO - MICHAEL NKECHINYERE. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note.

OZO - MICHAEL
NKECHINYERE.

Change of Name

I, formerly known and addressed as Oluwafemi Rejoice Adanna now wish to be known and addressed as EKEZIE, REJOICE ADANNA. All documents bearing my former name remain valid. The general public should please take note.

EKEZIE, REJOICE ADANNA.

Chukwu Condolences With Madu's Family

By Emeke Egejuru

The Head, Due Process and Public Procurement Bureau, Dr. Oluebube Chukwu, has commiserated with the family of Late Pa Chukwuemeka Madu, describing the departed patriarch as a principled, forthright, and God-fearing man whose influence extended across his community and beyond.

Speaking during the funeral held recently, at Ozuorji, Amuda Isuochi, Umunneochi Local Government Area (LGA) Abia state, Dr. Chukwu noted that Pa Madu lived a life rooted in integrity, discipline, and unwavering moral standards. He urged the children and extended family to honour their father's

memory by sustaining the values he exemplified.

"Late Pa Madu was a man of truth and character. His commitment to family, community, and the things of God is worthy of emulation. I encourage his children to uphold and reflect the moral standards he taught and lived by," Dr. Chukwu stated.

The funeral service, conducted at Grace Methodist Church, Amuda Isuochi, attracted relatives, friends, community leaders, and well-wishers who gathered to pay their final respects.

Delivering the sermon, the officiating minister, Rev. Chris Ekeoma Udeagha, extolled the virtues of the deceased, describing him as a devoted Christian, a peaceful family man,

and a model of humility and service. He urged Christians to emulate Pa Madu's exemplary lifestyle.

"Pa Madu lived a life pleasing to God. He showed love, patience, and kindness in all his dealings. If every Christian lived like he did, our society would be a better place," Rev. Udeagha said.

He further encouraged the congregation to reflect on the brevity of life and to live purposefully in accordance with God's will.

The ceremony featured tributes, hymns, and prayers of thanksgiving for a life well spent, as the community offered words of comfort and solidarity to the Madu family during their moment of grief.

News

Abia State Empowers Poultry Farmers With Modern Skills To Strengthen Food Security

By Ebere Tasie & Chijioke Chukwuemeka

Abia State has concluded a three-day capacity-building programme for poultry farmers drawn from across its Local Government Areas as a concrete step toward scaling up meat production and ensuring lasting food security in the state.

Speaking during the flag off ceremony held at the Abia Agricultural Development Programme Office in Umuahia, the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Prince Uzo Nwachukwu, explained that the training was designed to transfer globally accepted livestock management practices to grassroots farmers.

The aim is to raise standards, amplify production and build a sustainable poultry industry across the state.

As part of the Local Government Agricultural Intervention Scheme in collaboration with the Abia Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) the initiative selected six participants from each LGA (five farmers plus a farm manager), who will represent their communities and cascade knowledge and skills to other farmers.

Prince Nwachukwu emphasized that poultry is not the only focus, that parallel trainings in piggy, maggot farming, and pepper cultivation are also ongoing across different centers.

He lauded Governor Alex Chioma Otti's strong commitment to agricultural investment and urged trainees to put their new skills into immediate practice for the benefit of their localities.

Contributing, the Permanent Secretary of the Local Government Service Commission,

□Mrs. Ezinne Judith Ngwakwe ph.D, encouraged participants to view poultry farming as a robust, lifelong agribusiness venture capable of generating stable income.

Earlier in his address, the Programme Manager, Abia ADP, Mr. Okoro Nleanya Kalu, revealed that beneficiaries would receive starter kits including a foundational number of birds, equipment, and other essentials with plans to establish modern poultry outlets in select LGAs, each will be managed by a trained farm manager.

According to him, the strategy is to build a network of well-trained farmers who will step down the training to others in their communities, thereby expanding the State's livestock production capacity.

During the training sessions, one of the resource persons, Mrs. Angela Nwosu, spoke on the theme "Poultry Production and Management."

□She emphasized the technical demands of broiler production, stressing that proper site selection, feeding, brooding techniques, disease control, and drug administration are critical to minimizing losses.

Other facilitators also offered practical guidance on hygiene, disease prevention, and vaccine administration.

Also, an Agricultural Consultant and member of the Joint Agricultural Intervention Programme, Engr. Stanley Anuforo encouraged households and youths to venture into poultry agribusiness, describing it as a reliable pathway to food security, job creation, and sustainable economic growth.

Participants drawn from Bende, Ukwunagbo, Umuahia North, and Aba North LGAs including Mr. Ikoro Celestine Onyebuchi, Nwogu Chinweke, Ogbunachara Uche, and Mr. Chimaobi Lawrence Alozie expressed gratitude to Governor Alex Chioma Otti for approving the training and initiating agricultural innovations across the state.

They noted that the programme will not only boost meat production but also create employment opportunities and stimulate rural economic development.

The participants, however, commended the governor's ongoing interventions in the agricultural sector and other areas of the state economy.

Directors from Abia ADP and agricultural specialists from within and beyond the state were also present at the sessions, underscoring the broad support for the state's renewed agricultural push.

National Council Moves To Reposition Public Service In Nigeria

By Okereke Kate

National Council of Civil Service Commissions has concluded its 44th meeting in Abia State, with a move to support the nation's aspiration to build a \$1 trillion economy by 2030.

The Council with the 2025 theme, "Repositioning Civil Service Commissions in Nigeria, as a Hub of Professionalism in Public Service Human Resource Management", brought out strategic plan to ensure professionalism as the hub of public service in Nigeria.

At the week long event held at the International Conference Centre, Ogurube Layout, Umuahia, Abia State, the Council deliberated on how to reposition the Civil Service Commissions across the Federation.

In a Communique issued by the Chairman of the Communique Committee, Abubakar Balarabe Ammani Ndiomu, the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Philip Ebiogeh, among other members, the Council made presentations on the strategic repositioning, implementation and professionalization of Civil Service Commissions in Nigeria.

The discussions centered on the Federal Civil Service Commission's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, which emphasized merit-based recruitment, digital transformation and institutional independence.

Other deliberations included, transforming CSCs into hubs of Human Resource (HR) professionalism through enhanced HR processes, technology adoption, performance management and ethical governance, ensuring alignment with national development objectives such as the Renewed Hope Agenda.

The Council which is the highest consultative and advisory platform for strengthening institutional capacity, operational efficiency and governance culture across Federal and State Civil Service Commissions in Nigeria, harped on the need to enhance assertiveness in line with the constitutionally enshrined independence of the Civil Service Commissions, the need to handle political interference and nepotism within the law and regulations through the establishment of comprehensive and strict rules guiding personnel management processes, as well as, advocacy out to educate the populace, including the politicians.

They addressed staff retention in the face of the japa syndrome, improving remuneration and providing conducive work environment. They prioritized the need for standardise training for all cadres to engender merit-based promotion and career development of civil servants in the face of paucity of training funds, urging state governments to give the State Civil Service Commissions free hand to

exercise their constitutional duties.

Council equally resolved to encourage every State Civil Service Commission (CSC), within the next 12 months, to develop or review their strategic plans taking cue from the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) Strategic Plan (2026-2030) and source robust resourcing of such endeavours from both government budget and development partners and NGOs,

urging each State CSC to establish a Strategy Implementation Coordination Unit (SICU), to oversee the execution, monitoring, and reporting of its strategic plan.

The Communique further urged every Civil Service

the digitization of personnel records, introduction of e-approval systems, and development of employee self-service portals.

According to the Communique, all CSCs are encouraged as principal HR management institutions of the service, to update and empower themselves through system re-engineering, technology application, knowledge acquisition and staff skilling/re-skilling, adding that CSCs should implement the Performance Management System (PMS) in their organisations, in place of APER system.

They further advised various jurisdictions to apply relevant rules on record falsification, including change of date of birth.

strides recorded to include, a befitting ultra-modern office complex, adequate staffing and space for innovation, redefined vision and mission linked to the Commission's mandate.

According to Pastor Eno Jerry Eze, the vision and mission informed their strategic plan and work plan. "A mandate clarification process that reinforced the

Commission's mandate and strengthened synergy between

the Commission and the Office of the Head of Service.

"Strengthening merit-based recruitment by incorporating

improved human resource standards to ensure that only the

most qualified candidates are appointed into the service. We recently recruited 771 Health Care Officers in a process

rated as meeting global standards based on value, skills and

expertise devoid of ethnicity or Local Government of origin. For example, we recruited healthcare officers from

Adamawa, Imo, Anambra, Rivers, and Bayelsa states".

She also stated several other achievements of the Abia Civil Service Commission, and announced that Abia State is at the forefront of implementing and matching progress at the federal level. These reforms she added, reflected the highest level of political will and affirmed the belief that a strong and sustainable State emerges from a professional Civil Service, one that is modern, ethical, and strategically aligned with the developmental goals of the government.

In a Press Conference shortly after the Council was declared closed, the Chairman of the Federal Civil Service Commission, Prof Tunji Olaopa, reiterated the commitment of the Federal Commission to implement its strategic plans, so as to reposition the Civil Service.

Prof Olaopa, expressed delight that the Council has consistently convened its annual meeting since 2024 after a brief halt, noting that this continuity has greatly benefited the Council.

Also, Pastor Eno Jerry Eze affirmed the readiness of the Abia State Civil Service Commission to implement the resolutions from the 44th Annual Meeting to enhance service delivery.

The event was climaxed with a gala night held at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, where guests were treated with sumptuous meals and drinks, while Asaba was announced as the next host for the 45th Council meeting in 2026.



Chairman, Civil Service Commissions Pastort Eno Jerry Eze

Commission to maintain a zero-tolerance policy for any public servant found guilty of falsifying age, credentials or other vital records, adding that all CSCs should restore merit as a principal consideration in their recruitment and promotion processes and institute a clear and objective formula to accommodate the requirement for inclusivity and diversity management.

They encouraged CSCs, in their gate-keeping role and merit application, to take into account the suitability of recruitment candidates for civil service career, which requirement to public service anchored on patriotism rather than material or power benefits, calling all State CSCs to adopt and implement a Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), as soon as possible.

Also, Council pointed that CSCs should take advantage of the existing National Policy for Nigeria Education Repository and Data Bank, which will enable seamless verification of educational qualifications of recruited staff, encouraging all CSCs to transit to paperless operations as soon as possible, including

Similarly, the Council commended the Governor of the State, Dr Alex Otti, for making adequate provisions for successfully hosting the 44th meeting and also the Chairman of the Abia State Civil Service Commission, Pastor Eno Jerry Eze, PhD, for leading her institution to provide excellent hospitality and services all through the event.

At the Opening Ceremony, the Abia State Civil Service Commission Chairman, Pastor Eno Jerry Eze, reminded that the Civil Service remained the engine room of governance, and for the engine to run efficiently and effectively, the custodians of recruitment, conversion, confirmation of appointments, career progressions/adjustments, transfers,

discipline, and promotion must operate at the highest standards of integrity, competence and innovation.

In Abia State.

She disclosed that under the visionary leadership of the Abia Governor, the state has embraced a bold, reform-driven approach to reposition all sectors, especially the Civil Service, itemizing some key

News

Idima Abam People Calls For Peace, Return Of EzeOgo Chukwu Jonah

By Offor Okechukwu

The people of Idima Abam in Arochukwu Local Government Area of Abia State have expressed sadness over the arrest and detention of their king, Ezeogo Chukwu Jonah, by the Nigerian Police Force. They also condemned the destruction of properties, the killing of innocent people, and political intimidation allegedly carried out by the Red Chamber group led by Sampson Orji and Mike Okorie.

During a recent protest by the people of the Idima Abam, the President General of the Idima Abam Development Union, Arch Dike Patrick Kalu, who spoke to journalists criticized the the detention of their Ezeogo by the police from the IRT Unit Guzape Abuja. He said such detention was against a subsisting court order from an Abia High Court which had granted Ezeogo Chukwu Jonah freedom from any arbitrary arrest. position between two factions of the Umudi Ndume. This dispute began after the death of the former Ezeogo, Okorie Joshua of Umudi NdiOkorie, in 2022, who had earlier been forced into exile in September 2019 by the Red Chamber.

Arch Dike Kalu further said the accusations made by Sampson Orji and Mike Okorie that Ezeogo Jonah was leading a terrorist group were false and intended to disrupt his leadership.

Speaking during the protest, Mrs. Mary Chukwu Jonah, the wife of the detained king, confirmed that her husband was arrested by the Nigerian Police on November 19, 2025, at Ntigha in Abia State and taken to Abuja the following day.

The youth leader of the Idima Abam Development Union, Mr. Okorie Oloko, added that Governor Alex Chioma Otti had earlier suspended the activities of the Red Chamber group in Idima Abam due to increased violence, destruction of property, loss of lives, and the kingship crisis.

In their separate accounts, victims of the Red Chamber attacks Cecilia James Iroh, Nwanyi Sunday Okoro, and Thomas Kalu Okorie appealed to the state government to restore lasting peace in the Community, intervene in the crisis, and release Ezeogo Chukwu Jonah so he can continue his kingship rule in Idima Abam.



Residents of Idima Abam, Arochukwu, are protesting the illegal arrest and detention of their Eze Oga, Chukwu Jonah, by the Nigeria Police

Gov Otti Opens 44th Civil Service Conference, Seeks Stronger Public Service

By Ndubueze Ngozi

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has opened the 44th Annual Conference of the Civil Service Commission. He urged participants to ensure their discussions help improve public service delivery across the country.

Speaking at the event held at the International Conference Centre in Umuahia, Governor Otti represented by the Secretary to the State

Government, Prof. Kenneth Kalu said his administration is committed to improving all parts of the state's civil service, which he described as the "engine room of government."

He explained that because government policies are carried out through the civil service, it must be efficient and strong enough to achieve the administration's development plans. He encouraged participants

to stay focused on the goals of the civil service and work towards making it more professional and productive.

In her welcome address, the Chairman of the Abia State Civil Service Commission, Pastor Mrs. Eno Jerry Eze, PhD, welcomed delegates to the conference. She said the theme, "Repositioning Civil Service Commission in Nigeria as Hub of

Professionalism in Public Service Human Resource Management," highlights the important role civil service commission play in ensuring merit, fairness, and professionalism.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the Federal Civil Service Commission, Prof. Tunji Olaopa, stressed the need for a merit-based system to help improve the performance of Nigeria's civil service and support national development.

In the vote of thanks, Hajia Hindatu Abdullahi thanked Governor Otti for his support and commended the planning committee for a successful event.

The opening ceremony included a documentary about Abia State and goodwill messages. It was attended by commissioners, permanent secretaries from state and federal agencies, and other top government officials.

CPS Will Ensure Stress-Free Retirement ABSG

By Kelechi Eme-Ogidi

The Abia State Government, led by Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, has said that the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) will help civil servants enjoy a stress-free retirement. The scheme is designed to ensure that workers do not suffer or struggle when they retire, and that they move smoothly from active work to retired life.

The Commissioner for Finance, Mr. Uwaoma Ukandu—represented by the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Obi-Chiankwalam Elechi—said this during a briefing in her office before a road walk to sensitize

Abia workers as the state begins implementing the CPS.

According to Mrs. Obi-Chiankwalam, both the government and workers will contribute to the retirement savings of civil servants. She explained that the scheme will help workers get their benefits without worry, calling it a great initiative introduced by Governor Otti. She encouraged all workers with at least 10 years of service to join, saying it will secure their future. She added that at retirement, workers will receive a Lump sum of money and will not have to worry about pension or

gratuity payments, as everything will be properly managed under the CPS.

For registration, eligible workers must present their National Identification Number (NIN), employment letter, staff ID card, and a passport photograph with a white background. To make the process easier, Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) will visit ministries, departments, and agencies for enrollment so that workers do not need to gather in one location. Mrs. Ijoma Clara Dim, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Productivity, said she was happy that Abia State had

finally started the CPS. She described the scheme as powerful and helpful, noting that it has worked well in other states by ensuring timely pension payments.

Labour leaders in the state also welcomed the scheme, saying it will reduce irregularities in pension payments.

The Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) in Abia State, Comrade Okoro Ogbonnaya, said the CPS has been signed into law by the State House of Assembly. He explained that since it is now backed by law, the government must first deduct the

pension percentage before any other spending. He added that the scheme will continue even after the present administration.

He also explained that the government will contribute 8% while workers will contribute 7%, making a total of 15%. He praised Governor Otti for the initiative, saying it will end the era where workers retire after 35 years with little or nothing.

A former chairman of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), Comrade Ihechi Eneogwe, also thanked the government for starting the CPS immediately. He said the scheme will guarantee regular pension payments

Editorial

Nigeria's New Envoys And The Demanding Road Ahead

Nigeria's newly nominated diplomats face a world more complex than at any other time in the country's recent political history. Their appointments come at a moment when global alliances are shifting, economic nationalism is resurging, and Africa is redefining its role within the international system. For Nigeria, a regional power contending with domestic economic strain, security challenges, and the urgent need to restore investor confidence; the conduct, competence and clarity of its foreign service representatives have never mattered more.

Diplomatic postings are not ceremonial assignments. They are national strategic missions. Whoever receives Senate confirmation must recognize that they are stepping into roles that demand technical ability, political sensitivity, deep understanding of Nigeria's priorities, and the discipline to balance national interests with global realities.

The first task before the new envoys is to rebuild Nigeria's international credibility. Over the past decade, the country has witnessed fluctuating global perception, shaped by concerns about economic instability, insecurity, inconsistent policy signals and institutional weaknesses. Diplomats must work deliberately to communicate policy direction, reassure partners, and restore confidence in Nigeria as a stable international actor. This requires not just protocol but mastery of economic data, geopolitical intelligence, and country-specific priorities.

Second, the envoys must actively support Nigeria's economic diplomacy agenda. As foreign direct investment in Africa becomes increasingly competitive, Nigerian diplomats cannot afford a passive presence in their host nations. They must champion trade negotiations, market access, technology partnerships, and diaspora-driven investment. Missions should function as economic intelligence hubs—mapping opportunities, guiding Nigerian businesses seeking global expansion, and advocating for fairer bilateral arrangements.

Countries that thrive in the 21st century do so through the deliberate integration of diplomacy and economic strategy. Nigeria's envoys must transition from traditional diplomacy to result-oriented engagement: attracting industries, promoting exports, securing bilateral development programs, and building the country's global competitiveness.

Third, Nigeria's diplomats must help reposition the country within the African and multilateral spheres. The continent is experiencing a realignment: new military governments, rising influence from non-Western powers, and competing development models. Nigeria's voice, once a decisive force through ECOWAS and the AU, has in recent years grown quieter. The new envoys must work to rebuild Nigeria's leadership profile by championing stability, democracy, regional economic integration, and conflict resolution. Nigeria's foreign service cannot be reactive; it must reclaim an active, constructive seat at continental and global tables.

A fourth priority is protecting Nigerian citizens abroad. The challenges facing migrants, students, traders and professionals have increased from unlawful detentions to workplace exploitation, xenophobic violence, and human trafficking. Nigerian embassies must no longer be perceived as distant bureaucratic outposts; they should function as accessible support systems. Efficient consular services, regular engagement with diaspora communities, and strengthened bilateral protections must become institutional norms.

Equally important is the need for internal reform within the foreign missions themselves. Many embassies suffer from poor funding, irregular maintenance, outdated equipment and staffing shortfalls. The new diplomats will need to demonstrate administrative competence by ensuring that missions operate with professionalism, accountability, and strategic foresight. Fiscal discipline, transparent management of resources and modernization of embassy operations are essential steps toward restoring institutional integrity.

Finally, the incoming envoys must embody a renewed commitment to national unity and non-partisanship. Diplomacy is not an extension of local political disagreements. It is a national undertaking carried out on behalf of over 200 million citizens, regardless of political affiliation. Nigeria's diplomatic corps must reflect the values of cohesion, discipline, respect for diversity and dedication to national interest above personal or partisan considerations.

The Senate's confirmation process should therefore go beyond formalities. Nominees must be scrutinized for competence, integrity, diplomatic temperament and understanding of global affairs. The stakes are simply too high for appointments to be treated as patronage or rewards.

Nigeria's future in the global arena depends heavily on the quality and character of its representatives abroad. The nation needs envoys who can articulate policy, build alliances, attract investment, protect citizens and elevate Nigeria's standing. The road ahead is demanding, but effective diplomacy remains one of the most powerful tools for shaping the country's destiny.

The task before the new diplomats is clear. The question is whether they will rise to meet it with vision, responsibility and unwavering commitment to the national interest.

LETTERS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:
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Minimizing Fire Incidents This Dry Season

Dear Editor,

Permit me to draw the attention of your esteemed readers to the need to remain cautious this dry season to ensure that the rate of fire incidents is reduced to the barest minimum.

According to statistics released by the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Fire Service, fire outbreaks in Nigeria show a seasonal pattern, with a significant increase from late November to March, often linked to the dry season and increased bush burning. Monthly data for the FCT showed peak months in January (59 incidents), February (64 incidents), and March (33 incidents).

Therefore, as we enter another peak dry season, it is very important to consider the major causes of fire incidents and what should be done to reduce their occurrence during this period.

Bush burning is one of the major causes of fire outbreaks during the dry season. Most times, no one takes responsibility for such fires, which end up destroying farms and properties worth millions of naira.

When preparing farmlands, bush burning is an activity many of our farmers still engage in. Unfortunately, they often fail to control the fire, and it eventually overwhelms them and spreads.

Similarly, hunters—during their quest for game—often set bushes on fire and fail to control it, thereby allowing it to go out of control. While this act may help them get more game, it is detrimental to the environment and frequently destroys people's cash crops and properties.

Farmers, hunters, and the general public should be sensitized on the need to avoid bush burning because of its negative effects on the environment. Shrubs cut down for farming can be left to decay naturally to add nutrients to the soil rather than being burnt.

However, if farmers must set shrubs on fire, they should supervise the fire carefully, ensure it does not spread beyond the intended area, and confirm that it has died down completely before leaving.

The Hunters' Union should sensitize its members on the destructive effects of bush burning and develop better hunting strategies. This will help conserve the environment, protect wildlife, and safeguard society from the harmful consequences of uncontrolled fires.

Another cause of fire outbreaks during this season is the storage of flammable materials at home. Constant scarcity of petroleum products during this period makes some people store petrol, gas, and kerosene in their houses.

This act should be discouraged, as its consequences outweigh whatever benefits are derived from it. The government should ensure the availability of petrol, gas, and kerosene this festive season so that people will have no reason to store them at home.

Furthermore, homemakers must be meticulous this period to prevent fire incidents. For instance, those using cooking gas should stay close to the kitchen to monitor what they are cooking and turn off the gas completely when not in use. They should use their sense of smell and hearing to detect leakages and take swift action to prevent fire outbreaks.

Many fire incidents are linked to electricity; therefore, quality electrical materials should be used when building. Additionally, electrical appliances should be used only for their intended purposes. People should pay attention to heating appliances such as electric cookers, pressing irons, and boilers. These appliances use a lot of current and should be plugged into appropriate sockets with the right wiring to support their load.

Electrical appliances should be unplugged and the sockets switched off immediately after use.

When leaving home every day, all electrical appliances should be disconnected and sockets turned off to conserve power and prevent fire outbreaks that may result from power surges.

Finally, a popular saying goes, "Fire is a good servant but a wicked master." Therefore, may we continue to put fire to good use and avoid allowing it to become our master by letting it get out of control, as this is always disastrous.

Regina Nneoma Onoh,
FromAba



Ministers Summoned As Lead Poisoning Crisis Worsens In Lagos-Ogun Border Communities

The Senate has launched a full-scale investigation into the alarming outbreak of lead poisoning devastating Ogijo, a heavily populated community located along the Ogun-Lagos border.

This follows widespread scientific reports confirming toxic contamination linked to multiple used lead-acid battery recycling plants operating in the area.

Consequently, the Senate has summoned the Ministers of Environment, Health, Solid Minerals, and Labour and Employment, as well as the Director General of the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), to appear before its Committee on Environment and Solid Minerals for an urgent briefing on the unfolding crisis.

According to the Senate, unchecked activities of the factories have escalated into a major public health emergency. Children, women and factory workers are reportedly suffering long-term, life-altering health conditions after years of exposure to hazardous emissions.

To contain the crisis, the Senate approved a series of sweeping emergency measures, including:

Immediate deployment of medical teams by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) to conduct free toxicology screenings, blood-lead tests, chelation therapy and long-term treatment for affected residents.

Comprehensive environmental remediation by the Federal Ministry of Environment and NESREA to assess contamination

levels in soil, groundwater, air and household dust.

Establishment of a National Lead Poisoning Response and Remediation Office within the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to coordinate cleanup operations, medical intervention, monitoring and global traceability of exported lead.

The Senate Committee on Legislative Compliance has been mandated to ensure full implementation of the resolutions within six weeks.

The resolutions followed a joint motion sponsored by Senator Adetokunbo Abiru (Lagos East) and Senator Gbenga Daniel (Ogun East), who warned that Ogijo is now facing "an environmental catastrophe of global significance." Scientific assessments show contamination levels as high as 186 times above internationally accepted safety standards.

Presenting the motion, Senator Abiru expressed deep concern over the years-long health complaints reported by residents, including persistent headaches, abdominal pain, seizures, memory loss and cognitive decline — symptoms strongly associated with prolonged lead exposure.

After extensive debate, Senate President Godswill Akpabio directed the Committee on Legislative Compliance to monitor the execution of the resolutions and report back to the chamber within two months.

Senate Demands Clarity From CBN Over Alleged Non-Remittance Of N1.44tr Operating Surplus

The Senate has called on the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to give a detailed account of the alleged non-remittance of N1.44 trillion operating surplus to the Federation Account.

The request was made by the Senate Committee on Banking, Insurance and Other Financial Institutions, chaired by Senator Adetokunbo Abiru (APC, Lagos East), during an interface with the apex bank on its 2025 economic performance and projections for 2026.

Abiru said the clarification was necessary to strengthen public confidence in the nation's monetary authorities and ensure full compliance with financial regulations. He stressed that the Auditor-General's query on the unremitted surplus required a "clear, comprehensive and unambiguous" response from the CBN.

While commending the apex bank for Nigeria's improving economic indicators, the senator urged its leadership to sustain ongoing reforms to guarantee a more stable economic environment in 2026.

He acknowledged



Senate President, Senator Godswill Akpabio

recent gains in stabilising the foreign exchange market, reducing inflationary pressures and improving the country's international credit ratings.

"These positive indicators have not gone unnoticed globally," he said.

"The favourable assessments from Fitch Ratings and S&P Global underline renewed investor confidence, policy credibility and macroeconomic progress."

In his presentation, CBN Governor Olayemi Cardoso highlighted what he described as a renewed

phase of macroeconomic stability, driven by bold monetary reforms implemented since mid-2025.

Cardoso reported that Nigeria's real GDP grew by 3.98 per cent in the third quarter of 2025 — an improvement from the 3.86 per cent recorded in Q3 2024, though slightly below the growth posted in the previous quarter.

He identified crop production, information and communications technology, real estate, and financial services as major contributors to the growth momentum.

According to him, headline inflation

declined for the seventh consecutive month, falling to 16.05 per cent in October 2025 from a peak of 34.6 per cent in November 2024. Food inflation the most significant component of the consumer basket — dropped sharply to 13.12 per cent in October, from 21.87 per cent in August.

"This steady disinflation is restoring real purchasing power for households and businesses,"

Cardoso said.

"We remain committed to driving inflation down to single-digit territory over the medium term."

He further disclosed that the foreign exchange market had undergone a significant transformation, with the once-wide gap between official and parallel market rates shrinking to less than two per cent — a dramatic improvement from the over 60 per cent disparity recorded a year earlier.

The Senate is expected to continue its review of the CBN's submissions as part of broader efforts to strengthen accountability and transparency within Nigeria's financial governance framework.

Orji Uzor Sponsors Bill To Tackle Extreme Poverty

The Senate has taken a significant step toward strengthening Nigeria's social protection framework with the passage of a bill seeking to reduce extreme poverty through the establishment of Social Welfare Service Centres across the country.

The bill, sponsored by Senator Orji Uzor Kalu, scaled second reading recently after receiving unanimous support from lawmakers. It aims to harmonise and boost existing welfare interventions by creating a centralised, data-driven structure to coordinate social support programmes.

Leading debate on the floor, Senator Kalu described poverty as one

of the nation's most stubborn and enduring challenges.

He noted that despite multiple interventions over the years, millions of Nigerians still struggle to access basic necessities due to what he termed "the absence of a unified institution capable of managing and monitoring welfare programmes effectively."

Under the proposal, a new Social Welfare Service Department would be created under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, with dedicated offices in all the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory.

This, he said, would ensure that welfare initiatives are implemented at the grassroots and not

limited to Abuja.

The department would oversee a wide range of programmes, including food and cash transfers, education stipends, housing support, subsidies for marginal farmers, credit facilities, and allowances for the elderly and persons living with disabilities.

A key provision of the bill is the establishment of Safety Centres nationwide, along with a national register of beneficiaries and programme graduates. This database is expected to enhance accountability, curb corruption, and track long-term outcomes.

The bill also spell out strict eligibility requirements for

beneficiaries, such as households earning below ₦5,000 monthly, day labourers making less than ₦3,000 per job, low-income artisans, subsistence farmers, and residents of slum communities. Senator Kalu said these criteria were designed to prevent political interference and ensure assistance reaches those who need

Lawmakers praised the initiative, stressing the urgency of eliminating leakages and inefficiencies that have plagued previous welfare schemes.

The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Public Service, which is expected to report back within four weeks.

Focus

Abia Records Major Strides In Basic Education ...NILDS Victory, ERIT Reforms And School Upgrades Highlight Sector Progress

By Ekebuisi Precious

Abia State's basic education sector under Governor Alex Chioma Otti, OFR, is receiving the desired attention, with recent developments indicating a growing momentum in school improvement, teacher support, institutional strengthening and student capacity-building. From competitive academic achievements to structural reforms and community-focused initiatives, activities within the Ministry of Basic Education continue to underscore a broader commitment to raising learning standards across the state.

Recent highlights include Abia's first-place performance at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) South-East Senatorial Academic Competition held in Enugu, intensified school mentorship visits by the Education Reform and Innovation Team (ERIT), and the completion of targeted school improvement projects in strategic education zones. These efforts complement ongoing collaboration between education stakeholders and state management authorities aimed at strengthening both basic and secondary school systems.

Abia Emerges First at South-East NILDS Competition

One of the most notable recent achievements for the state came at the National Institute of Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) South-East Senatorial Academic Competition, hosted in Enugu, where Abia State clinched first place, securing the right to represent the entire South-East zone at the national level.

The competition, which assesses students' understanding of democracy, legislative processes and civic responsibility, is designed to identify and nurture young talents capable of contributing to Nigeria's democratic development. Abia's victory has been regarded as a significant boost for the state's education profile, especially as it reflects not only student excellence but also the collective efforts of teachers, administrators and curriculum support teams.

Education observers within the region noted that this performance reinforces the state's steady academic improvement trajectory, which has been attributed to increased training for teachers, a more structured approach to learning support and renewed attention to extracurricular academic engagement.

ERIT Board Engages Stakeholders in Strengthening Education Delivery

The Education Reform and Innovation Team (ERIT) Board of Trustees recently held meetings with senior management of the Basic and Secondary Education Ministry, focusing on performance improvement, operational alignment and strengthening reform execution pathways.

The sessions brought together education officials, school administrators and reform advocates to review progress in curriculum implementation, learning environments, teacher performance indicators and support structures for students. According to those in attendance, the discussions emphasized the need for uniform standards across all education zones and a collaborative approach between the Ministry, ERIT and school leadership teams. The engagement also highlighted the importance of



Amakama Community High School Classroom Setting

monitoring and evaluation systems in ensuring that reforms translate into measurable improvements in classrooms across the state. Participants agreed on scaling up support mechanisms for teachers and ensuring that tools provided during previous training sessions are fully utilized at school level.

School Improvement Managers Intensify Field Visits

In line with the ongoing reform efforts, ERIT School Improvement Managers have embarked on a new cycle of school visits, providing mentorship, coaching and cascading of best practices to teachers and administrators.

These visits, an integral part of the reform framework are designed to translate policy into practice by ensuring that educators receive real-time guidance within their work environment. The managers engage directly with teachers, assess classroom interaction processes, and provide feedback aimed at enhancing instructional techniques and learner engagement.

Insights from recent field activities indicate that the visits focus on:

- Strengthening teacher lesson delivery
- Improving classroom management styles
- Enhancing student assessment techniques
- Providing leadership support to school heads
- Identifying resource gaps and improvement priorities

Schools visited in the latest cycle, which follows the August training sessions, have reportedly shown improved organization, better supervision systems and more structured learning environments. ERIT officials stated that the field visits will continue in phases to ensure that reforms are experienced across all LGAs.

Completed School Projects Reflect Renewed Focus on Infrastructure

Abia State Ministry of Basic Education ably led by Hon. Goodluck Chinedu Ubochi has also recorded progress in physical infrastructure upgrades, with several school rehabilitation projects completed in recent months.

Two notable examples include:

Amakama High School, where completed improvements have enhanced learning spaces and strengthened the institution's readiness for expanded enrollment; Ibeku High School in Umuahia North, which also benefited from upgrades aimed at modernizing its facilities and improving the student experience.

These projects fall under a broader initiative targeted at reviving aging infrastructure, eliminating overcrowding, and ensuring that students learn in environments conducive to academic success. Teachers in the affected schools have acknowledged the improvements, noting that upgraded facilities have boosted morale and classroom interaction. Education administrators say the new infrastructure interventions are part of a phased plan, with more schools expected to undergo renovation, structural reinforcement or equipment upgrades in the coming months.

Ministry Reaffirms Commitment to Teacher Support and Learning Quality

Across the different initiatives, a recurring theme is the emphasis placed on teacher development as the foundation of education reform. The Ministry of Basic Education, working with ERIT and other stakeholders, continues to prioritize mentorship programmes, workshops and monitoring systems designed to empower educators and improve student performance. Officials within the ministry note that sustained collaboration between government agencies, reform partners and school communities remains key to achieving long-term goals in the sector. They emphasize that recent successes, such as the NILDS competition victory, illustrate what can be achieved when stakeholders at all levels work in alignment. Furthermore, expansion of supervisory frameworks, reactivation of quality assurance processes and digital documentation of school evaluation reports have been identified as current focus areas for the ministry.

Looking Ahead: Consolidating Progress in the Education Sector

The recent series of achievements and activities in the basic education subsector suggests that Abia State is positioning itself for broader transformation. The combination of structural reforms, academic competitiveness and teacher-centered development indicates a shift towards sustainable improvement.

As the state prepares for the next round of academic competitions, continues school reforms and strengthens institutional collaboration, education stakeholders say the priority remains ensuring that students receive quality education backed by modern support systems, motivated teachers and improved learning environments.

With infrastructure upgrades ongoing, field mentoring intensifying and reform alignment improving, the outlook for basic and secondary education in Abia State appears increasingly promising.

News

Methodist Church Honours Chukwu as Pillar of Hope

By Emeka Egejuru

The Head, Due Process and Public Procurement Bureau, Abia State, Dr. Oluebube Chukwu, has been honoured with the prestigious Pillar of Hope Award by Christ Methodist Church. The honour was conferred during the church's 2025 Annual Adult Harvest and Thanksgiving Service held at Methodist Church, World Bank Housing Estate, Umuahia, Abia State. According to the Presbyter, Bethel Circuit, Very Rev.

Vincent C. S. Isiocha, JP, the recognition came as a result of Dr. Chukwu's unwavering integrity, service to humanity, commitment to due process, consistent support for community development initiatives, and his immense assistance to Governor Alex Otti in delivering quality governance to Abians. The clergy also lauded Dr. Chukwu for exemplifying transparency, steadfastness, and a lifestyle that inspires hope across the state. In his response, Dr. Oluebube Chukwu, who was represented by his Executive



Dr. Oluebube Chukwu

Assistant, Mr. Arisa Udemgba, thanked the church for finding him worthy of the honour. He expressed gratitude to the clergy and congregation for the recognition and urged them to continue praying for and supporting the administration of Governor Alex Otti, noting that the Governor remains committed to sustaining the transformation currently reshaping Abia State. Earlier in his sermon, Very Rev. Isiocha delivered a deeply reflective message titled "Letting Go of the Past." He charged Christians to shed the burdens of past

disappointments, hurts, and regrets, emphasizing that spiritual growth becomes possible only when believers embrace renewal and trust God for fresh beginnings. He noted that Thanksgiving is a moment of release, renewal, and realignment with God's purpose. The event chaired by Dr. Adibe Ogechi, attracted dignitaries, parishioners, and friends of the church also featured musical presentations, prayers, thanksgiving offerings, and expressions of gratitude, marking a successful and uplifting 2025 Adult Harvest celebration at Church.

Features

Tinubu's Ambassadors

By Reuben Abati

No one should be surprised at the level of controversy that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's ambassadorial list of 35 nominees, whose names have been sent to the Senate for confirmation has generated in Nigeria. Former Ambassadors were recalled in September 2023, and now it has taken two years and two months for the government to announce new ambassadors, against the background of loud protests about the face-off with US President Donald Trump, over alleged Christian genocide in Nigeria. The general argument was that if the government had appointed Ambassadors before now, and the country was represented in the US by an Ambassador Plenipotentiary, not by a junior Charge d'Affaires, the US-Nigeria religious issue may not have escalated so badly. As part of the efforts to address this charge, the administration has now hurriedly dug up a list and initiated a conversation about ambassadorial postings. In April 2025, it had been reported that the Federal Government was screening persons to be posted to the country's diplomatic posts. Some of the names reportedly on that old list, are now in the list that has been made public in November 2025. Perhaps if there had been no diplomatic issues with the United States, we would still have been waiting for Godot.

Ambassadors represent the sovereign, and they are also the personal representatives of a Head of State in a receiving country, with the responsibility to promote the country's interest abroad, build and foster relationships, trade and business, gather information, negotiate agreements, assist Nigerians in the country, and communicate with special interests in the receiving/host country and advise the sending/home country on foreign policy. My favourite book on the subject is the book generally considered the Bible of Diplomacy, namely R.G. Feltham's *Diplomatic Handbook* which covers the broad scope of diplomacy as a serious business of international law and relations. With its announcement of 35 ambassadorial nominees, the Tinubu administration has finally acknowledged the seriousness of the business of diplomacy, but the main criticisms are noteworthy: one, that it is a list of persons of questionable pedigree, character and temperament, two, that it is a patronage list which seeks to reward party chieftains, foot-soldiers, political families, expired politicians and boys looking for jobs; three, that the list does not reflect the quality and depth of talent available in Nigeria, and four, that it is so underwhelming, it should be withdrawn.

Nonetheless, an ambassadorial posting is a prestigious assignment. It is a great honour to fly one's nation's flag in a foreign flag. Besides, the title of Ambassador is retained for life, and you get addressed as "Your Excellency" for the rest of your life even if you stopped being Excellent. Ambassador Joe Keshi, Nigeria's former Consul General in Atlanta, USA, submits that the list is composed of the good, the bad and the ugly as in the 1966 Western film epic, starring Clint Eastwood. He is right. Character is important in diplomacy, and this is the main issue that has been raised with President Tinubu's list of nominees.

For obvious reasons, there may be no reason to panic. The nomination of a person as an ambassador is merely the first step in a process. The nominee goes through security screening by the sending country. Nigerians in their preliminary reactions argue that the Nigerian security system cannot be trusted to do any diligent screening. They claim that that they have found on the list, persons of questionable pedigree: persons who have no principles, professional political jobbers who stand for nothing, wife beaters, corrupt politicians, party hacks, with only a small percentage of career ambassadors making the

list, and that if proper screening had been done, certain personalities should never have shown up on that list. But there is a second step: the nominee's name is submitted to the Senate for further screening and confirmation. Here, the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs is expected to further re-examine the nominee, ask every possible question, assess the person's temperament and evaluate objections by the public, and on the basis of this, take a decision. In a value-based process, the filtering process at this level should filter out the bad and the ugly.

Whereas Nigerians may be aware of this, they claim that they are skeptical of the present National Assembly, an Assembly that seems to dance to the dictates of the Executive arm of government and particularly the Presidency. But even if Senators rubber stamp the President's list, the Foreign Affairs Ministry would still have to request an agreement – that is an official consent to the nomination by a receiving/host

who at 83, was excited to be nominated as a non-career ambassador. He died in Maryland, US, at 85, three years after his appointment. The least that Nigerians can do is to campaign vigorously and urge persons who may have been nominated and who know that they are not fit or good enough to step down. Self-knowledge is a virtue, and every man must be true to himself. Nigerians are unfortunately too desperate. Nigerians need capable men and women as diplomats. The kind of situation at home whereby it is easier for touts, and persons with dubious wealth to get to high places should not be exported to the international arena. Diplomacy is meant to advance the country's estimation in the eyes of the world, not to lower it. In a country of over 200 million people, and with a rich resource of talented people, the Tinubu administration should not settle for the lowest of the pack. In many of the countries abroad, there are Nigerians who are already embedded in foreign systems, with a deep knowledge of culture, history and

Affairs Minister, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar. How much of that policy does any of the nominees seeking to become Ambassadors understand? Do they think it is a useful policy or they just want to be an ambassador for the sake of the title? There are ambassadors who served under the Buhari administration about 83 of them who have already established contacts in various countries abroad for Nigeria. Is there a review system to identify some of them and return them to duty, especially the career ones, instead of changing diplomats every Eke market day?

President Tinubu recalled 83 diplomats in September 2023. He has now named only 35 nominees. Nigeria has 109 missions abroad including 76 embassies, 22 High Commissions and 11 Consulates. Is he going to name more persons? If so, he should be thoroughly guided by current responses from the public. But what would have been preferable is a proper review of the country's foreign diplomacy process: a rationalization of the number of missions, the welfare of diplomats and a deepening of capacity at the Ministerial level to monitor the missions. There is no point having an ambassador in every post. For example, one Ambassador can cover the Scandinavian countries. One person can oversee Niger and Chad, or Togo, Cameroon and Chad. Things became so poor in Nigerian missions abroad at a point that the embassies could not pay for utilities. Many diplomats could not travel with their families because they had to share apartments with their colleagues. Funding from the home state was irregular. The ambitious and aggressive ones among our diplomats became traders, using diplomatic privileges to make quick profit. It is only luck that has saved this country so far that we have not had a scandal that would be a cause celebre in international diplomacy, that cannot be covered up! We can trim the bureaucracy.

The plight and interest of career ambassadors should be treated as paramount. Diplomacy may be political, but it is also a professional calling. The convention is a 70: 30 ratio in favour of career diplomats. The dream of every professional is to get to the top in their line. The politicization of diplomacy frustrates the ambition and dreams of those who have chosen it as a vocation. It can be doubly depressing to see outsiders crowd one's space, and watch them dominate just because they have political connections. This kills morale. In a random review of President Tinubu's list, most of the persons are not from the Foreign Affairs Ministry – the lowest ratio in recent years. The people from the intelligence sector even seem to have a better deal. Is this an open admission of the known fact that the golden season of Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is long gone?

So much talk about Nigeria's diplomacy since President Tinubu named his proposed ambassadors. We end this commentary with the well-worn view, nonetheless important, that domestic policy drives foreign policy. Nigeria's standing in the world will be determined not solely by Tinubu's ambassadors, but by a full reflection of how Nigeria treats its people at home. Do the people have enough to eat? Do they feel safe? Are they well taken care of? Are the children well provided for? Do the people trust their government? In the age of modern diplomacy, as different from traditional diplomacy, the reproducibility of technology, the rise of artificial intelligence, globalization, the increasing role of non-state actors and the multiplication of wicked problems over-testing the wisdom of the community has created new frontiers in world diplomacy. Nigeria must learn to measure up!



government, signaling a mutual agreement that the person so nominated is acceptable to the receiving country. There are no obligations here, the receiving country is at liberty to either accept or reject the proposed diplomat without offering any explanation, upon which the sending country would either have to offer a replacement or downgrade the receiving post. Nigerians may draw consolation from this. Even if the system at home is compromised, it would be difficult to do so at the receiving end. It is by the way, a process that may take months, and a lot of diplomatic negotiations. The persons on Tinubu's list may not jubilate too early. They should not count their chickens before they are hatched. The various embassies in the country are listening posts. The current public debate about the various nominees is important to the extent that they provide cheap and free intelligence on the basis of which the foreign missions will advise their home states. Nigerians cannot bribe the embassies. The level of diligence however varies from one mission to the other.

There is yet another dimension: the nominee may choose to decline the nomination either on health grounds or for any other reason. Professor Bolaji Akinyemi famously rejected his nomination as Ambassador to the United States under Presidents Umaru Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan. On the contrary, we have also had a Justice Sylvanus Nsofor

community who could be recruited to represent their home country. Sending village people, whose only credential is that they belong to the right political party or that they once did the President a favour or had gone to him to beg him and his wife for forgiveness and help misses the point entirely. In choosing non-career ambassadors, there are Nigerians in Diaspora who are qualified and competent.

It is now up to the National Assembly to prove itself or disappoint the country. They must put Nigeria's interest first. Nigerians will be pleasantly surprised if they were to reject the "Baba so pe" (Our Father has directed...and so be it) or "Emi lo kan" (It is my Turn) principles. No nominee must be asked to take a bow. There must be no sentiments. No emotions. An ambassadorial appointment is not a chieftaincy title. It is a call to duty. The screening must be done in the open, in the full glare of the public. The President may have powers under Section 171 (2c) of the 1999 Constitution to appoint or fire ambassadors but public opinion/perception should be considered in the screening process. Nigeria belongs to all of us. We have a stake in ensuring that nobody goes out there to embarrass the rest of us. Incidentally, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's foreign policy approach is based on a doctrine of 4Ds – Diaspora. Development, Demography, Democracy and Global Impact. It was a policy approach championed by the incumbent Foreign

Religion

What Is In The Word That Endangers Exploits

By Bishop David Oyedepo

We discover from Scriptures that the Bible is the most valuable volume of all times. It is written, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:1-3). It is the oldest, yet the most current book. It is also the most ancient, yet the bestseller of all times. It is the most widely quoted book and its principles still rule most of the civilised societies today. Its content touches all aspects of human existence, and that is what makes it the key to our unending turnarounds. The Bible is a living force and there is something unique about it. God's Word is ever-reliable, ever-dependable, and eternally functional. His integrity backs His Word; therefore, we can count on Him.

However, what we do with the Word largely determines our destiny. That means, it is our value for the Word that defines what becomes of our lives. This is because the contents of the Bible are spiritual laws that confer us with dominion in our earthly walk. The light of God's

Word does not only enlighten; it also lightens us (John 1:1, 4, 9). The Word puts us in command of everything, because all things were created by the Word, and everything remains under the command of the Word forever (John 1:3). Therefore, having potentials or skills is not a substitute for gaining command over our desired turnarounds. We must have the consciousness that the devil is not as powerful as we think he is; rather, it is our ignorance of the dominion we have over him, through the Word, that makes him torment us.

Too many people approach the Bible like a motivational or a religious text, where they draw religious principles. That makes them relegated day in, day out, because they don't know what it carries. The Bible is the only 'charm' that does not lose its potency. The application of God's Word works any day and at anytime. Also, Jesus is the wisdom and the power of God, and He is the Word of God. Thus, God's Word is also the wisdom of God; thus, when we eat the Word, which is the Knowledge of truth, there is bound to be a reward because our expectations shall not be cut off (Proverbs 24:13-14). We might not know the efficacy

of the Word until we begin to put it to work in faith, delightedly, cheerfully, excitedly, lovingly, passionately, zealously and selflessly. This is because the Bible cannot be re-written. We either connect with what is written or we are disconnected from it.



Bishop David Oyedepo

What Then, Is In The Word That Endangers Exploits?

1. The Spirit Power of the Word: God's Word is Spirit and life, and it is able to quicken. The Bible says, It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63). It can also

invigorate everything that is dying. Thus, the Bible enables us to partake of that divine nature of God that gives us dominion over the things that corrupt the world.

2. Empowerment in the Word: God's Word is self-anointed and it is divinely

powerful. Therefore, every genuine encounter with the Word empowers people to do the impossible (Romans 1:16; John 1:12).

3. The Healing Power of the Word: God's Word carries His nature, which is immune to sicknesses and diseases. The Centurion said to Jesus, ...but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed (Matthew 8:8). Hence, when we receive and believe the Word, we buy into divine nature that establishes our dominion over every assault on our bodies. Every time God's Word goes forth, God's healing power goes forth. That is why we are told that Jesus, the living Word, went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Luke 5:17).

4. Deliverance in the Word: There is deliverance power in the Word and its light empowers us for dominion over the powers of darkness. As it is written, And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32). We must recognise that we are contending with invisible forces on a daily basis, but revelation of the Word is our guarantee for victory. Darkness is the highest realm that the enemy operates in to perform his wicked works. However, when we put on the armour

of light, we disarm him as if nothing ever existed before. Thus, walking in the light of the Word empowers us to always triumph over darkness. When there is light in us, we cannot stumble because darkness flees at our instance and the entrance of God's Word gives light (Psalm 119:130).

In conclusion, most times, what we hear is powerless until we believe it, and what we receive is helpless until we believe it. It is a combination of receiving and believing that empowers our full-scale manifestation. Thus, it is not enough to receive the Word; we must go a little further to believe the Word and then, we dominate our circumstances. However, you must be born again. Are you born again? If you are not, this is an opportunity to do so. Simply say the following prayer:

Lord Jesus, I come to You today. I am a sinner. Forgive me of my sins. Cleanse me with Your precious Blood. Today, I accept You as my Lord and personal Saviour. Thank You, Jesus, for saving me! Now, I know I am born again! For further reading, please get my books: Turnaround Power of the Word, The Force of Freedom, Walking in Dominion, Satan Get Lost, Born to Win and Fulfilling your Days

Family Matters

By Pastor Faith Oyedepo

The home is the most important institution in the world. It is the first department in which a child learns to become a proper citizen – a man or woman of dignity and value. By home, I mean primarily the members of the family or more specifically, the father and mother.

Among the institutions for child training, the home has the largest share of the responsibilities. If the home fails, the Church, society and the school will be greatly affected. Many atrocities all over the world today, are a direct result of improper home training.

Drug addicts, armed robbers and fraudsters all have a family, because nobody dropped from the sky. Every living being today came from a family. If the respective families that make up a society fail to carry out their responsibilities, then the children which are products of the family will become dregs of the society. "Charity begins at home," they say.

It is also important to understand that child raising in the home should be allowed to follow a natural process. While the formal method of training is good, you must use every opportunity that presents itself in the home to communicate morals across to the child. These include: mealtimes, when you are in the kitchen

together, in the sitting room or even before bedtime. All these times that you may count as informal can be used to train a child.

It is in this atmosphere of love that the Holy Spirit is able to move freely, and the destiny of the child is easily realised. Thus, it is time to work on the atmosphere of your home and make it conducive for the Holy Spirit to move. God cannot dwell in a place where there is strife, fighting, envy and bitterness. Where such things are found, there will be room for all kinds of evil. The Bible says: For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work (James 3:16).

The question you must answer is, "What kind of home do I have?" Is it a place of healing or centre of gossip, where you criticise everybody in your Church or

office? I discovered something amazing in Jeremiah 22:29, which says: O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. Do you know that even the ground of your home absorbs what you say? So, when you abuse people, backbite or gossip, the ground is absorbing the words of your mouth! In other words,

the words of your mouth are seeds being sown into your ground. Unfortunately, you are the one doing the sowing, but it is not only you who reaps it; your children also do. May you be a sower of good seeds!

Most importantly, the place of a woman in raising a child can never be overemphasised. This is because, to a large extent, it is the woman who determines the atmosphere of the home. Do you know that just by entering a home, you can feel the atmosphere in it? If there is bitterness, envy,

strife, etc, you can sense it. However, where there is peace, love and joy, it is easy to tell also.

We are told that Napoleon Bonaparte, was asked what the greatest need of France was. He said, "Good mothers!" If I am asked what the greatest need of this generation is, I will also say the same. This is our greatest need because irrespective of your efforts on the adults of today, if you don't raise responsible children, tomorrow might be bleak! So, child raising is an important aspect of the society.

However, until you are born again, you don't have what it takes to make child's training conducive. To be born again, you have to confess your sins and accept Jesus as your personal Saviour and Lord. If you are ready for this new birth experience, please say this prayer in faith: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, I come to You today. I am a sinner. Forgive me my sins and cleanse me with Your Blood. I accept You as my Lord and personal Saviour. Make me a child of God today. Thank You for delivering me from sin and Satan to serve the living God and thank You for accepting me into Your Kingdom.

Congratulations! If you prayed this simple prayer of faith with me, you are now born again and a child of God. He loves you and will never leave you. Read your Bible daily, obey God's Word and seek Christian fellowship (John 14:2)



Photos Speak



Gov Alex Otti of Abia (R) in a handshake with the oldest practicing Journalist in Abia, Mr Joe Akwarandu of the Pilot Newspaper (L) while others watches, during the Monthly media briefing by Abia Gov.



Gov Alex Otti of Abia sympathizes with Barr. Roy O. Umahi Nweze and his two Son's, during the burial of late Mrs. Ozioma Dora Umahi Nwaeze (Nee Ayozie) at Uburu Ohaozara LGA of Ebonyi State.



Gov Alex Otti of Abia (2nd R) pose with National Ambassador's Govt House Reporter, Amarachi Uzoukwu, Mrs Glory Abiakam (1st L) and others, during the Gov's media monthly briefing.



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State (L) in a hand shake with the CEO, Innoson Motors, Chief Innocent Chukwuma © while another Guest (c) watches with smile, during the 75th birthday celebration of Prof Poly Ekenike at the Harbour Point Event Center, Victoria Island, Lagos.



Abia Newspapers Staff displaying their products at the 2nd Aba International Trade Fair Holding at Aba Mega Mall



Gov. of Abia State, Dr. Alex Otti performing the groundbreaking for a total of 15 MVA injection substation to boost power in Umuahia and it's environs at Ogrube Layout, Umuahia.



The Secretary to the State Government (SSG) Prof Kenneth Kalu, 7th from the left, was pictured with top government functionaries during the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols held recently at Michael Okpara Auditorium.



The Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Prof. Kenneth Kalu, seated to the right, was joined by a host of other top government functionaries during the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols held recently at Michael Okpara Auditorium.

Photos Speak



L-R: Mr Peter Obi, Senator Repr Anambra Central, Sen. Victor Umeh, the Celebrant, Prof Poly Ekenike and Gov of Abia State, Dr. Alex Otti, during the 75th birthday celebration of Prof Poly Ekenike at the Harbour Point Event Center, Victorial Island, Lagos.



Education Reform And Innovation Team (ERIT) Board Of Trustees And Members With His Excellency, Gov Alex Otti (Middle) And Management Of Basic And Secondary Education



Gov Alex Otti of Abia (8th R), Chairman, Federal Civil Service Commission, Prof. Tunji Olaopa (9th R), Chairman, Abia State Civil Service Commission, Pastor Eno Jerry -Eze (9th L), SSG to Abia Gov, Prof Kenneth Kalu (7th R) and others, as Abia Gov. received a delegation of Federal Civil Service Commissioner and State Chairmen of Civil Service led by the Chairman, Federal Civil Service Commission in his Nvosi home.



R-L: Chief of Staff to the Gov, Pastor Caleb Ajagba, SSA to Abia Gov on Political Affairs, Hon. Acho Obioma, Comm. for Information, Prince Okey Kanu, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Abia State Deputy Governor, Barrister Chijioke Nwankwo and others, during the groundbreaking ceremony for a total of 15 MVA injection substation to boost power in Umuhia and it's environs at Ogurube layout, Umuhia



L-R: Chief of Staff to the Gov, Pastor Caleb Ajagba, Ph.D, SSA to Abia Gov on Politic Affairs, Hon. Acho Obioma, Abia Born Musician, Sugar Lipz and Comm. for Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, Mr Matthew Ekwuribe, during the 80th birthday celebration of Musical Legend, Dr. Sir Paulson Kalu, at Micheal Okpara Auditorium, Umuhia.



Cross section of participants during the Senatorial National Institute Of Legislative And Democratic Studies, South East Competition Held At Enugu where Abia State Came 1st To Represent The Zone recently.



L-R: Abia Comm. for Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr. David Kalu and SA to the Gov. on Investment Promotion and Public-Private Partnership, High Chief Green Amankwe, during the 80th birthday celebration of Musical Legend, Dr. Sir Paulson Kalu, at Micheal Okpara Auditorium, Umuhia.

Photos by: Chukwu Chidiebere & Nzubechi James

Interview

We Are Poised To Restore The Quality Of Public Service To Support Gov Otti's Vision --- Pastor Eno Jerry Eze

As Abia host the 44th Annual National Council of the Civil Service Commissions of the Federation, the Chairman of the Abia State Civil Service Commission and the State's Human Capital Development (HCD) Focal Person, Pastor Dr Eno Jerry Eze, in this interview with National Ambassador Reporter, Amarachi Uzoukwu, offers deep insights into the sweeping reforms currently reshaping the Abia civil service and why the State has become a model for public sector transformation under the leadership of Governor Alex Chioma Otti.

Pastor Dr Eno Jerry Eze also sheds light on the ongoing skills mapping exercise, reforms in recruitment and the State Government's investment in capacity-building for civil servants.

She also speaks on her vision of a merit-driven, technology-powered public service; the State's unprecedented achievements in Health emergency preparedness and the role of Human Capital Development in strengthening governance.

Excerpts;

Can we meet you?

I am Pastor Dr. Eno Jerry Eze, a distinguished Human Resource professional, governance reform advocate, and transformational leader with a passion for empowering individuals, organisations, and communities and nations. I hold a PhD in Human Resource Management, a Master's in International Human Resource Management, and an MBA in Entrepreneurial Management.

With a career spanning the private and public sectors—including banking, oil and gas, and business consulting—I have established myself as a champion of citizen-centred governance, inclusion, and human capital development. As Chairman of the Abia State Civil Service Commission, I am driving initiatives that promote excellence, merit based systems, and innovation in public service delivery.

Beyond my professional accomplishments, I serve as Resident Pastor of Streams of Joy Umuahia, Vice President of the Jerry Eze Foundation, Convener, Women on Fire Prayer Network, and Thursday Midnight Prayer, where I continue to inspire transformation rooted in faith, service, and impact.

Leadership And Vision.

What is your overarching vision for transforming the Civil Service Commission in Abia State?

A. My vision is to restore the quality of public service through a professional, skilled, merit-driven system fully equipped to support His Excellency Gov. Alex Chioma Otti's vision for the state.

As an HR professional, I am passionate about transitioning to efficient HR processes and policies that will be managed through electronic platforms—it will cut down inefficiency and bureaucracy by over 70%.

This is important because the government delivers on health, education, water, and other social sector services through the civil service. The civil service also regulates the climate that supports or restrains private sector investments.

At the core of organisational success is Human Resource—we are positioning to attract and retain the best talents towards improved service delivery. Government is not an exception.

We seek to restore the glory of the public service where the best of the best can be found in both professional and non-professional cadres of the service.

The Civil Service is the engine room of sustainable growth in Abia State, and His Excellency recognizes this. He is injecting young exceptional persons into the service and upskilling and retooling the existing staff.

B. Vision of the Civil Service Commission

When I assumed duty, I realised that the Civil Service Commission did not have a roadmap that breaks down its mandate into actionable plans.

Now, we have redefined our vision, mission, and values. All these are contained in our strategic plan and work plan.

This way, we are all on the same page at the Commission.

Vision

A core of highly professional, competent, disciplined, accountable and productive civil servants dedicated to efficient and effective

service delivery and the development of a strong and virile Abia State. New Abia; New Ways of Working.

Mission

To create excellence in service delivery in Abia State through a qualitative civil service system rooted in merit and professionalism, underpinned by technology and innovation.

How has your leadership philosophy influenced recent reforms within the Commission?

My leadership philosophy is rooted in the fear of God, purposeful leadership—helping both government and individuals reach their full potential—and people. As a Pastor and HR professional, I am passionate about creating systems that allow people to thrive and reach their God-ordained destiny and purpose. Both Abia State and the people of Abia can be destiny—and purpose-conscious through discipline and an enabling environment for growth and prosperity. I believe that people perform better when processes are clear—everyone understands the direction, fairness is upheld, and leadership is purposeful.

What are the most significant milestones achieved under your tenure so far?

We have recorded several key achievements, and I am grateful for the leadership and support of His Excellency Governor Alex Chioma Otti OFR. Some notable milestones include:

Reorganising the Civil Service Commission to respond to its mandate—the Commission is fully operational, and the skills and equipment we need have been put in place.

Let me add that we have moved into our permanent site—a facility befitting the mandate of the Commission.

Clearing Backlogs and Strengthening Discipline

The backlog of promotions for 2022, 2023, and 2024 has been sorted. The process for 2025 is ongoing. We have also closed out lingering disciplinary cases, etc.

Introducing Innovation and Transparency

We have brought innovation and transparency into every assignment. The ongoing recruitment of health officers was managed in line with global HR standards.

Through this process, the most qualified and professional civil servants are brought into the system through a merit-based process.

Top State in Health Emergency Preparedness Abia State was recently ranked the most prepared state in Nigeria for health emergencies, according to the 2025 SBM Health Preparedness Index report, scoring 26.85—the highest in the country. This achievement reflects our deliberate investment in human health capital, robust budgetary allocations (14.8% of the state budget), and strong governance systems. It underscores the effectiveness of our recruitment and capacity-building efforts and the state's readiness to respond effectively to health crises.

Enhancing Partnership and Synergy

His Excellency continues to encourage all MDAs to work together. We have partnered with other MDAs (the Head of Service, Ministry of Health, Office of the Secretary to the Government) to achieve various initiatives of this administration. In partnership with Cosharis, Abia has rolled out electronic buses, demonstrating our commitment to innovation and improving public services.

Publication of the Annual Report (1 January – 31 December 2023) For the first time in many years, the Civil Service Commission produced and published a comprehensive Annual Report



Pastor Eno Jerry Eze (PhD)
CHAIRMAN CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

covering activities from 1 January to 31 December 2023.

This report documents our reforms, recruitment processes, promotions, disciplinary actions, capacity-building efforts, policy updates, and strategic priorities.

Its publication strengthens transparency, deepens accountability, preserves institutional memory, and provides stakeholders with clear,

data-driven insights into the Commission's work and impact.

Key Partnership-Driven Achievements Include:

Recruitment of 771 Healthcare Professionals:

We are recruiting full- and part-time consultants, medical doctors, nurses, dentists, dental technologists, and therapists. The entire recruitment process has been professional, seamless, and fully merit-based, with every stage automated.

To ensure transparency and efficiency, the Commission has deployed a software-driven Computer-Based Testing (CBT) system. Candidates are tested onsite, their results processed immediately, and successful applicants are scheduled for interviews in organised batches until each role is fully filled.

We uphold the highest global standards in how we treat candidates, including the use of email communication to keep applicants informed at every stage of the process.

Abia Leadership Academy (Investing in Generation NEXT).

Skills Mapping:

Identifying, assessing, and documenting the skills, competencies, and knowledge of all civil servants with the intent to highlight strengths and identify gaps. The skills mapping process has reinforced the urgency of transitioning into human resource management (policies and framework) and an HRMIS. The HRMIS will contain and maintain electronically the complete employment lifecycle of every civil servant—from recruitment to retirement.

Capacity Building:

Providing opportunities for staff to participate in training and conferences both within and outside the state.

Recently, the government sponsored 20 delegates to the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM) Conference.

Supporting Ongoing Civil Service Reforms:

The Commission supports ongoing civil service reforms, including the process of transitioning from administrative-clerical services and routine manual documentation to strategic HR management—managing people (talent) and resources to achieve specific goals and objectives.

How is the Commission addressing issues such as redundancy, skill gaps, and productivity in the civil service?

We are adopting a strategic and developmental approach. That is why we introduced the Skills Mapping process. First, we conduct regular assessments to understand where gaps exist—whether in skills, staffing levels, or performance. Based on these findings, we implement:

Need-based recruitment – we recruit young, skilled, and passionate staff into the service. We also recruit experienced staff where necessary; e.g., the ongoing recruitment is engaging consultants. Reskilling and redeployment for officers whose roles no longer align with priorities.

Merit-based promotions to ensure high performers are elevated.

Strengthening of performance evaluation systems to improve accountability.

Our mandate is not just to fill vacancies, but to build a workforce that is relevant, passionate, efficient, and prepared for the demands of 21st-century governance.

Are there any new guidelines or policies for recruitment, promotion, or disciplinary procedures within the civil service?

Yes, we are currently updating several key guidelines to reflect transparency, fairness, and modern HR standards. For recruitment, we have adopted stricter verification processes and clearer criteria for qualification and selection. This also includes CBT testing and practice-based interviews. For promotions, we are strengthening the use of competency assessments, productivity metrics, and performance appraisals to ensure that elevation is earned, not given.

On disciplinary procedures, we have improved response timelines, documentation standards, and the overall objectivity of the process. Our goal is to ensure that due process is followed, but also that discipline is firm, fair, and consistent across all cadres.

As the State HCD Focal Person, how do you see the link between human capital development and effective governance?

Human Capital Development is about the government investing in people. When citizens are empowered and government systems effectively address social sector needs, our human capital indicators rise. In Abia State, we have taken a deliberate, structured, and inclusive approach to HCD—ensuring that every sector that touches the lives of our citizens is strengthened. Our HCD framework spans key ministries such as Education, Health, Agriculture, Poverty Alleviation, Women Affairs, and the Disability Commission, as well as the Civil Service Commission. This multi-sector approach ensures that development is not isolated—it is interconnected and supports overall governance.

Abia State government has met national HCD-recommended budget benchmarks in Education and Health. By recruiting new teachers and healthcare officers, prompting private sector investments, supporting agricultural interventions, and ensuring prompt payment of salaries, pensions, and allowances, the government is creating an environment where every citizen thrives.

Simply put, when we invest in people, we strengthen institutions. And when institutions are strong, governance becomes more transparent and effective for all Abians. The framework for the implementation of HCD in Abia State is contained in our HCD Strategic Plan.

What should the public expect from the Commission in the next phase of its reforms?

The Government is currently the highest employer of labour. Within the context of our mandate, the Commission will continue to support the reform initiatives of His Excellency, Governor Alex Otti OFR.

Improve service culture – In partnership with the Head of Service, fully deploy the HRIMS to modernise personnel management.

Continue to strengthen merit and electronic-based processes for recruitment and promotion.

In partnership with the Office of the Head of Service, roll out new service standards that improve efficiency and service delivery across MDAs.

Deepen automation of internal processes to reduce human error and speed up service delivery.

Our commitment is simple: to build a civil service that works—efficiently, ethically, and in the best interest of Abians. The reforms we have started are only the beginning.

Abia State is hosting the 44th Annual National Council of the Civil Service Commissions of the Federation. You must be proud of this achievement.

We are excited about the opportunity to host the conference; it is a testament to the recognition of His Excellency's achievement in public service reforms.

The ongoing transformation in Abia State is in alignment with the reforms at the federal level; therefore, we are prepared to showcase our process, experience, and lessons learnt.

Importantly, we have modern and innovative world-class facilities that meet international standards, fully equipped to host conferences of this magnitude. We are ready and eager to welcome delegates from across the nation.

News

250 Abia Residents With Disabilities Receive N200,000 Business Grants

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

To mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 250 people with disabilities in Abia State have each received a N200,000 business support grant under the Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI) Social Investment Programme.

The RHI Economic Empowerment Programme was launched on recently at the Michael Okpara Auditorium in Umuahia. The goal is to help strengthen small businesses owned by people with disabilities across Nigeria.

Speaking at the event, the Wife of the President, Senator Oluremi Tinubu represented by the Wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti said the programme is an important step toward building an inclusive society where everyone has the chance to contribute.

She explained that the programme was launched at the same time in all 36 states, the FCT, and in the Defence and Police Officers' Wives Associations.

According to her, 250 persons with disabilities in each state and the FCT will receive N200,000 each to support their businesses. This adds up to N1.9 billion and will benefit 9,500 people nationwide. The Defence and Police Officers' Wives Associations will also receive N50 million to help support their members.

Senator Oluremi Tinubu said the initiative supports President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which aims to promote inclusive growth and ensure no Nigerian is left behind, especially those with special needs.

She advised the beneficiaries to use the money wisely to grow strong, sustainable businesses. She also thanked Governor Alex Otti and his wife for supporting the disability community in Abia State.

The Chairman of the Abia State Disability Commission, Mr. David Anyaale, said the grant is more than just financial help. He described it as an investment in dignity, economic inclusion, and independence. He praised Governor Otti for removing barriers faced by persons with disabilities and urged the federal government to adopt similar inclusive policies.

Gov Otti Gives N150m Start-Up Grants To 150 Polytechnic Graduates

By Chinaza Onyema and Nwokoma Blessing

Governor Alex Otti has given out N150 million to 150 graduates of Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba, to help them start their own businesses. Each graduate received N1 million.

The Rector of the school, Dr. Christopher Kalu Okoro, presented the cheques during a pre-investment training held at the school auditorium. He urged the beneficiaries to use the money wisely

and focus on building successful businesses that can create jobs for others.

Dr. Okoro reminded the graduates that the money is meant only for business. "This money is not for Brazilian hair or betting. It should help you grow and become better so you can give back to society," he said.

He also explained that the money is a grant, not a loan, and praised Governor Otti for the support. He noted that it was the first time a state

government in Nigeria was giving such financial assistance purely for empowerment.

The governor first announced the initiative during the polytechnic's 2024 convocation, promising N1 million each to the 50 best graduating HND students from the 2021/2022, 2022/2023, and 2023/2024 academic sessions. The beneficiaries submitted business proposals, which were reviewed and approved by a consultant.

The pre-investment

training prepared the graduates for business management. Facilitators Dr. Chinweoke Nwaeze, Mr. Shaka Obasi (CEO, Panyu Hotel), Dr. Uche Nwosu, and Mr. Nwaohu Ugochukwu of Shaga Group taught them basic business skills, warned them about challenges in a competitive environment like Aba, and shared important legal tips to help them avoid unnecessary problems.

The Student Union Government President,

Comrade Ifeanyi Michael Maduka, thanked the governor and said the grant would encourage students to work harder in school.

Some beneficiaries including Chukwuma Egwuatu (Accountancy), Nwachukwu Cyril Emmanuel (Business Administration and Management), and Nduka Harmony (Mass Communication) said they plan to invest the money in growing their businesses and creating jobs. They also praised Governor Otti for helping them begin their journey as entrepreneurs.



Some of the beneficiaries of Governor Otti's N150 million start-up grant to 150 polytechnic graduates in a group photograph with the Rector and facilitators.

Commissioner For Works Tours Bende-Ohafia-Arochukwu Road, Tasks Contractors On Speedy, Quality Delivery

By Okereke Kate

The Abia State Commissioner for Works, Engr Otumchere Oti, has undertaken an inspection tour of the ongoing reconstruction of the Bende-Ohafia-Arochukwu road, a strategic route expected to ease movement for residents and visitors during the festive season.

The road, which had long deteriorated into a death trap for motorists

and commuters, is currently undergoing reconstruction after Governor Alex Otti awarded the contract to Allied Technical and Construction Company Limited. Determined to ensure quality delivery, the Commissioner, accompanied by a team of engineers, Ministry officials, and the contractor handling the project, Engr Ifeanyi Clement Okorie, visited the site for an on-the-spot assessment of the pace and standard of work.

During the inspection, Engr. Oti highlighted key observations and urged the contractors to accelerate efforts so that the project is completed within the stipulated timeframe.

He emphasized the administration's commitment to delivering durable infrastructure that will stand the test of time.

Speaking with newsmen at the site, an indigene of Arochukwu, Madam Chinonso Michael reacted positively over the road rehabilitation which she said has been bad for

decades. She thanked the Governor for remembering the people of the area in his developmental projects.

Another indigene of the area, Kalu Okoro, expressed deep appreciation to the Governor for making the long neglected Bende-Ohafia-Arochukwu road his priority. He recalled the hardship and dangers previously faced due to the road's deplorable state, noting that the ongoing construction has already brought significant relief to

commuters.

The residents equally commended the Governor's dedication to improving infrastructure across the state and pledged their continued support for his administration's developmental agenda.

Mr Chinkwe Onyekachi, a builder who resides in Arochukwu, said the reconstruction of the road will boost economic activities in the area among others benefits, commending the Governor's gesture.

Joseph Jacob
 JOSEPHJACOB1914
 070361698671



Creative Writers Hangout

Uche and the Sword (10)

While Trouble and another man were counting the money Mr. Ukpai walked back into the farm.

"Sir, it is N520,000" Trouble told Mr. Ukpai when he came out neatly dressed with a white short sleeved shirt and navy blue trousers. He collected the huge bundle of money, "Men, God have blessed us. This present J.S.I students can doll out cash"

Three of them laughed happily and headed towards the vice Principal's office.

Sandra and Uche followed the men carefully. The men unlocked the door and got in. Uche and Sandra went behind the office and placed their ears on the window.

"Trouble, boot the computer let's do the changes now" Mr. Ukpai said

"Yes sir" Trouble replied.

"Mr. Umenta here is your share N150,000."

"Thank you sir" Mr. Umenta said "I'll see the Principal tomorrow for the new computers he wanted to buy."

"Don't forget I have a share in every purchase." The Vice Principal said.

"I can't forget sir."

"It's set sir" Trouble announced.

"O.K. Umenta go and do your job. Make sure Nkeiru scores nothing less than 27 over 30 in all her subjects. "Trouble list out all the sword students and the position they'll get. Have your own share first N150,000"

"Thank you sir," Trouble replied happily.

"Sir" Umenta started "there's a problem"

"What is it?" the Vice Principal asked as he walked over to Umenta

"There's another student leading despite the increase on Nkeiru's score."

"Who's that?"

"This girl, Sandra Ama"

Sandra held her breath.

"Reduce Sandra's score, she's not a sword" The Vice Principal ordered. Trouble came out to urinate. Uche and Sandra were engrossed in their eavesdropping that Trouble saw them first "Who's that?"

Uche and Sandra took to their heels. Trouble pursued them. The light showers had made the path very slippery. Sandra could not run as fast as Uche would have if he was in front

"Fast, fast, fast!" He urged her.

Uche heard a groan and a thud on the ground. He turned behind and saw Trouble. He had fallen. His back was on the ground while both legs were up when Uche saw him. Trouble struggled to his feet and continued the pursuit. But Uche and Sandra had widened the gap. The cloudy sky made the night's darkness thicker. Uche and Sandra were running without seeing clearly. Sometimes they would run into the bush before they would see the path and jump back to it. Fortunately, Trouble had come out without his torch, he too was not seeing clearly.

Sandra slipped and fell. Uche jumped over her, and pulled her up. "Did you wound?" Uche gasped.

"No"

He took her by the hand and started running, increasing the pace. Sandra followed him tiredly. Uche kept hearing the sound of Trouble's feet as he pursued unrelenting. He was getting closer to them as he was more familiar with the

path and he was running faster.

"Uche I'm tired" Sandra gasped as she attempted to stop. Uche pulled her on. "No, Sandra, try. They'll kill us if they catch us. The fence is very close I can see it" Uche urged as he dragged Sandra along.

The path that led to the fence was straight with little grasses. So Trouble could see two human figures running towards the fence. When they got to the fence, Uche squatted down and Sandra

mounted his shoulder. He lifted her up; she climbed the fence and jumped over.

Uche climbed almost immediately but before he could jump over Trouble pulled him down.

Sandra jumped down but waited in vain for Uche to jump over. She started crying.

When Uche failed down his hand found a piece of block and he picked it. While Trouble was battling to catch his breath after the long pursuit. Uche shattered the block on his head. Trouble staggered missed his step and went down on his hands and knees. Uche saw two torchlights coming from a distance. He quickly climbed the fence and jumped down. Sandra was leaning on the fence weeping

"Let's go! Let's go!" Uche urged as he jumped down Sandra followed him happily.

When Sandra and Uche got to Sandra's house, they entered her room through the window. By now Uche's body was quaking with cold, his teeth were clattering. "Lie down on the bed." Sandra said as she went to her wardrobe and collected a thick blanket and covered Uche to his neck.

"I thought they caught you"

"Nearly, Trouble pulled me down; thank God he did not look at my face. He was so tired and felt he had caught me. I threw a piece of block at him, he failed down. So I jumped" Uche said tiredly.

"Thank God." Sandra said happily as she opened the door and left.

When she came back about ten minutes later Uche had fallen asleep. She woke him up and gave him a cup of tea and four slices of buttered bread. The last time Uche took tea was with his mother in the village. He had not taken tea since he came to the town, as Kate did not find him worthy of taking tea. The tea Sandra gave him was the first he had taken that had a lot of milk in it. He took it happily and thanked her. Beads of sweat formed on his forehead. He lay again on the bed and covered himself.

"What do we do now?" he asked as Sandra came in from keeping the cup "Now that the vice Principal is involved, I'm finished"

"I don't think so. Just forget about it. And read your books by Monday we'll know what to do" Sandra said as she sat at her reading table.

"When are your exams ending?" Uche asked.

"Monday; what of your's?"

"Tuesday. Whenever I remember that school will be vacating on Friday I feel scared."

"Uche, I hope you'll pass? You have

no option, you're condemned to pass" Sandra said as she lightened her face.

"I want to make you a promise"

"What is it?" Sandra asked.

"Sandra, I will not only pass, I will come first, I mean it."

"That's very good. That's if the sword will let you."

"You're right my sister." Uche sighed. Sandra looked at her watch, "Uche now is 6:15 am, I hope you've felt

warm. I want you to be going before my parents wake up"

"Thank you"

Sandra Uche said as he got out of the bed and climbed the window

"Remember, nobody is to hear what we saw."

Uche nodded and jumped out. Sandra locked her window, lay down on her bed and covered herself. Her thought wondered to when the vice Principal asked Umenta to reduce her score. "So that was why I've not come first despite my hard work?" she asked and sighed. Before long she slept off.

The following Monday, Uche met Trouble at the school gate "Good morning Sir!" He greeted.

"Hello my boy; how was your weekend?"

"Fine sir" Uche replied happily as Trouble did not recognize him. Uche looked at the lump on Trouble's forehead and laughed in his heart, "I'm a lethal boy" he told himself.

Mr. Godwin gave Uche and Uzo a form from the U-17 coach. They had been selected to be part of the team that will represent Nigeria in the U-17 Meridian cup.

Uche told Sandra the story when they met after the first paper.

"Ehe! Congratulations" Sandra exclaimed happily

"After school you'll help me fill it. Hold it for me so that I'll not rumple it"

Uche left the form with Sandra who fixed her eyes on him in admiration until he ran into the football pitch.

After the day's exams Uche and Sandra met. "How was the exam?" Sandra asked as Uche came over and sat beside her with his pen in his hand.

"Its fine. Do you know that the Integrated Science teacher called me into the staff room today and asked me who wrote his paper for me",

"Did anyone write for you", Sandra asked.

"Nobody wrote for me. The teacher said I got 98 percent"

"That's very good keep it up"

They started filling the form. Sandra explained the meaning of surname, gender, hobbies, and next of kin to him. Two items to be filled by parents or Guardians were left out. Uche would take it to his uncle.

"So what are we going to do about what happened on Friday" Uche asked worriedly.

"I've decided to report to the Principal." Sandra said

"What!" Uche exclaimed with both hands on his head "The Principal will never believe us."

Will Sandra muster the courage to report to the Principal? Will he believe her?

AUTHOR OF THE WEEK Tove Jansson

Tove Jansson (1914-2001) was a Finnish-Swedish author, illustrator, and artist best known for creating the beloved "Moomin" series. Born in Helsinki, Finland, into a family of artists, she grew up surrounded by creativity and storytelling. Her father, Viktor Jansson, was a sculptor, and her mother, Signe Hammarsten-Jansson, was an illustrator. This artistic environment profoundly influenced her imagination and nurtured her talent from an early age. Jansson's childhood was marked by the natural beauty of the Finnish archipelago, which later became a recurring setting in her work, reflecting both her deep love for nature and her fascination with the harmony and isolation of island life.

In the 1930s, Jansson studied art in Stockholm and later at the Finnish Art Society's Drawing School in Helsinki. She began her career as a painter and political cartoonist, contributing to various magazines, including the satirical "Garm", where her wit and visual storytelling shone through. During World War II, her illustrations often contained subtle anti-fascist messages, a reflection of her strong moral stance and independent thinking. Although painting remained an important part of her life, it was through writing and illustrating stories that Jansson found her most distinctive and enduring voice.

The Moomin stories, first appearing in the 1940s, established Jansson as one of the most original children's authors of the 20th century. The series began with "The Moomins and the Great Flood" (1945), followed by "Comet in Moominland" (1946) and "Finn Family Moomintroll" (1948). These books introduced readers to a world inhabited by gentle, philosophical creatures who faced both adventure and adversity with warmth and curiosity. The Moomin tales, though written for children, contained profound reflections on friendship, identity, and belonging, earning admiration from readers of all ages around the world.

Beyond the Moomin universe, Jansson was a prolific writer of adult fiction. Her novels and short story collections, such as "The Summer Book" (1972), "The True Deceiver" (1982), and "Fair Play" (1989), revealed her skill in exploring complex human emotions and relationships with subtlety and psychological depth. These works often mirrored her own experiences and perspectives, drawing upon themes of solitude, creativity, and the delicate balance between love and independence. Her concise prose and sensitivity to atmosphere gave her adult fiction a quiet yet powerful resonance.



Jansson's personal life was as rich and independent as her artistic one. She lived much of her life with her lifelong partner, Tuulikki Pietilä, a respected graphic artist, with whom she shared both creative and emotional companionship. The couple often spent their summers on Klovharun, a small island in the Gulf of Finland, where Jansson found peace and inspiration. Their relationship, discreetly expressed in her later writings, reflected Jansson's openness to living authentically in a time when same-sex relationships were not widely accepted.

Tove Jansson's legacy endures through her books, art, and the universal philosophy of kindness and imagination embodied in her creations. The "Moomins" have been adapted into films, television series, and stage productions, captivating new generations across the world. In Finland and beyond, she remains a cultural icon—an artist who bridged the boundaries between children's literature, visual art, and adult fiction with grace and originality. Her work continues to remind readers of the beauty of empathy, the power of creativity, and the quiet strength found in simply being true to oneself.



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Metro

Abia, Imo Launch Joint Security Taskforce

Abia and Imo States have inaugurated a joint security taskforce and surveillance operation along the Aba-Owerri Expressway, to combat rising incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery, and other criminal activities.

The initiative, announced by the Special Adviser to Abia State Governor, Alex Otti, on Media and Publicity, Ferdinand Ekeoma, covers the route from Owerri in Imo State.

According to the statement, the taskforce, which includes soldiers, naval personnel, police officers, DSS operatives, and other security agencies, will patrol the expressway 24 hours a day. The operation

will also involve extensive surveillance of surrounding areas using drones and modern security equipment.

Governor Otti commended Imo State Governor, Hope Uzodinma, for the recent arrest of criminals responsible for attacks on travelers, including an assault on Otti's advance team.

Ekeoma added that the governors had assured road users of their safety, especially with the approaching Christmas period, while warning that anyone caught engaging in criminal activities on the route would face severe consequences.

Imo Businesswoman Arrested For Brutal Torture Of 6-year Old Housemaid

The Imo State Police Command has arrested a 38-year-old businesswoman, Mrs. Juliet Igwe, for the brutal torture of her six-year-old housemaid, Onyinyechi. The suspect was paraded recently at the command headquarters in Owerri.

Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Henry Okoye, described the assault which involved burning the child's private parts with an open candle flame, pouring boiling water on her hands, and dripping hot wax on her body as "despicable, barbaric and totally unacceptable in any civilized society."

According to Okoye, operatives of the Ideato North Division arrested Igwe in Uruala Community following credible intelligence. He commended the Stand for Human Rights Foundation, led by activist-journalist Chidiebube Okeoma, for promptly alerting the police and assisting in the rescue.

"The Commissioner of Police, CP Aboki Danjuma, is deeply saddened by this wicked act. He has directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of the State CID to take over the case and ensure the suspect is charged to court without delay," Okoye stated.

During questioning, Igwe admitted to the torture

but said she "did not know" that applying fire and boiling water would cause such serious injuries. She accused the child of stealing meat from her cooking pot and claimed her actions were meant "to teach her a lesson."

Chidiebube Okeoma, founder of the Stand for Human Rights Foundation, confirmed that his team responded to a distress call, rescued the severely injured child, and handed both the victim and suspect over to the police. He condemned the attack, describing it as "the height of wickedness against a defenseless child."

The foundation has taken responsibility for the child's medical care and has admitted her to the Imo State University Teaching Hospital, Orlu. Okeoma also expressed appreciation to Dr. Uche Ewelike, Executive Secretary of the Imo State Health Insurance Agency, for approving free and comprehensive medical coverage for the minor.

The police assured that Igwe will face the full weight of the law once investigations are concluded. (NAN).

Police Arraign Five For Alleged Fake Kidnap Report In Akwa Ibom

By Lovina Emole

The Akwa Ibom State Police Command has arraigned five suspects for allegedly circulating a false report claiming that schoolgirls from Oron Secondary School had been kidnapped.

Commissioner of Police, Baba Mohammed Azare, confirmed the development during a strategic security meeting with youth leaders from the 31 local government areas at the command headquarters in Ikot Akpanabia.

Azare condemned the act, warning that such false

alarms could trigger panic and erode public trust. He stressed that the command would not hesitate to take firm action against individuals spreading misinformation or attempting to destabilise the state.

He charged youth leaders to promote truthful reporting, responsible use of social media, and active efforts to counter harmful narratives. He also called for stronger cooperation with Divisional Police Officers for early detection of threats and

quick intervention.

The CP further cautioned against jungle justice, describing it as unlawful, barbaric, and capable of inciting widespread violence. He insisted that all suspects must be handed over to the police for proper investigation and prosecution.

On the recent state government ban on hostile masquerade activities, Azare announced that enforcement had commenced. He explained that masquerades must now

restrict their activities to village or town hall squares and must obtain clearance from his office when necessary.

Youth leaders at the meeting commended the Commissioner for his leadership and the sustained peace in the state, pledging their support to enhance security. A representative of content creators also promised closer collaboration with the police and vowed to desist from activities that could cause public disorder.



A cross-section of participants at the high-level strategic security meeting with CP Baba Mohammed at the Command Headquarters, Ikot Akpan Abia.

Police Parade Suspects In Killing Of FRSC Officer

The Osun State Police Command has arrested three suspects over the gruesome murder of a Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) officer, Lasisi Funmilayo, and her 12-year-old daughter, whose bodies were allegedly dismembered for ritual purposes.

Police Commissioner, Ibrahim Gotan, while briefing journalists recently, in Osogbo, said the arrest followed a report lodged by the wife of one of the suspects, Fajemirokun Victor (38), who claimed her husband had gone missing after travelling to Ikoyi.

According to Gotan,

operatives of the Anti-Kidnapping Unit traced the matter to Ikoyi, where Fajemirokun's abandoned vehicle was recovered. Further investigation led to the arrest of an herbalist, Gboyega Aberefa (39), on November 16. Aberefa reportedly confessed that Fajemirokun brought the victims to his shrine in Ijebu-Jesa on November 2, 2025, for money rituals.

Aberefa further revealed that his boys Sunday James (38), and two others identified as Kehinde and Idowu (currently at large) slaughtered the FRSC

officer and her daughter, removed their vital organs, and disposed of their bodies in separate locations. The mother's remains were dumped in a river in Esa-Odo, while the daughter's body was abandoned in a nearby bush.

Fajemirokun, speaking to newsmen, admitted taking the victims to the herbalist after being told the woman's existence was the cause of his misfortune.

"After I agreed to the killing, my conscience disturbed me and I ran away. I later told people in Ibadan that my life

was in danger, and they gave me money to escape, so I travelled to Ghana," he said.

Aberefa, however, stated that the suspect had insisted both mother and child be killed: "He brought them to my house and claimed the woman was the source of his misery. He wanted to kill her inside my house, but I refused. I then called some boys who took them into the bush, killed them, removed some organs, and disposed of their bodies."

Police said efforts are ongoing to apprehend the fleeing accomplices.

Opinion

Echoes of 2015: Is Nigeria Sleepwalking into 2027?

By Dakuku Peterside

Humans are wired to look for patterns. It is how we tame uncertainty: by joining dots, comparing seasons, and reading omens in what has gone before. In Nigeria today, many politically attentive citizens are doing precisely that. As 2027 slowly comes into view, they look back at 2014–2015 and feel an unnerving sense of déjà vu. Rising insecurity. A shattered economy. Opposition forces groping towards a coalition. Northern politicians are complaining of marginalisation. A wary, sometimes hostile, posture from Washington. Are these just isolated coincidences, or are we watching an old script being dusted off for a new performance?

The 2015 elections were not ordinary. They marked the first time an incumbent president lost at the federal level, the first time power passed peacefully to an opposition coalition, and the moment when a mood of "anything but this" swept across much of the country. Beneath that historic outcome sat five powerful currents: the escalation of insurgency and insecurity; a fraying relationship with the United States; a stumbling economy; a coalesced opposition under a single banner; and a deep sense of political alienation in parts of the North. Those same currents, in slightly altered form, are again visible in the run-up to 2027. That alone should give us pause.

Start with insecurity. In 2015, Boko Haram dominated the headlines and the national imagination. Entire local governments in the North-East were effectively under insurgent control. The Chibok abductions became a stain on the conscience of the state. Scenes of internally displaced persons lining up for rations, students taking exams in camps, and soldiers complaining of poor equipment defined a campaign in which "securing the country" was not just a talking point but a desperate plea.

Today, Boko Haram and its offshoots have been joined by other actors: heavily armed bandits, kidnap-for-ransom gangs, and hybrid jihadist-criminal groups operating across large swathes of the North and Middle Belt. What were once isolated horror stories have turned into a steady drumbeat of attacks and abductions. In too many communities, schools have become soft targets rather than safe spaces, forcing repeated closures or "holiday without date." When government announcements celebrate the "rescue" of abducted children, yet citizens cannot name a single high-profile mastermind tried and convicted in open court, people draw their own conclusions: either the state is overwhelmed, or someone, somewhere, is playing politics with their pain.

Layered on top of this is the economy. The 2015 vote took place after a sudden collapse in global oil prices exposed the fragility of Nigeria's mono-product dependence. Salaries were delayed; reserves thinned, and talk of "belt-tightening" grew louder. It was painful, but for many, it still felt like a storm that might pass.

The current moment feels different. For millions of Nigerians, the phrase "economic hardship" barely captures the reality. Hunger is not a theoretical threat; it is in the pot that is now half-empty, in school fees that cannot be paid, in the

quiet sale of family land or jewellery to meet basic needs. On paper, technocrats argue about reforms, exchange rates, and fiscal adjustments. On the streets, people see something simpler: a government that cannot balance its books without borrowing heavily; a currency that buys less every month; a cost-of-living crisis without a visible safety net.

Elections in such a climate are primarily about survival. In 2015, the promise of "change" rode on this economic anxiety as much as on any ideological difference. Voters did not need sophisticated policy analysis to know that the status quo was hurting them. The same is true today. The danger for incumbents is obvious; the threat to democracy is more subtle. When hardship persists across administrations and party labels, people stop believing that any election can change their material reality. Cynicism, not hope, becomes the default.

Then there is the choreography of opposition politics. The 2015 story cannot

coalition of faith and frustration. The opposition space is more fragmented, with strong personalities each carrying loyal bases and substantial baggage. Coalescing is harder when nobody can automatically play the role of first among equals. If 2015 showed how powerful a united opposition can be, 2027 may test whether such unity is still possible without a prominent anchor.

Running through all of this is the question of northern political sentiment. In 2015, mainstream northern politicians and a significant portion of the northern electorate felt deeply aggrieved. They believed the region was under-represented in key appointments, unfairly targeted in media narratives, and above all, abandoned to an escalating insurgency. Whether entirely fair or not, that sense of injustice translated into electoral behaviour. Many northern states swung heavily against the incumbent, and the "northern mood" became a decisive factor.

Today, a new variation of that narrative is emerging. Many northern political actors

handling of internal crises have created the impression, in some circles, of a White House that is, at best, impatient with Abuja and, at worst, openly hostile. For Nigerian voters already mistrustful of external interference, this reinforces a familiar storyline: that crucial elections at home are being watched – and perhaps influenced – from abroad.

So, are we dealing with a coincidence or a pattern?

Coincidences are random alignments; patterns suggest underlying structure. When the same five elements worsening insecurity, economic crisis, opposition coalescence, northern alienation, and fraught US relations – reappear in the build-up to another pivotal election, it is hard to argue that this is mere chance. What we may be seeing is the predictable outcome of deeper, unresolved issues: an economy still tethered to a volatile commodity; state institutions too weak to provide security or justice at scale; political parties built as electoral vehicles rather than policy platforms; and a foreign policy that reacts to pressure rather than shapes partnership.

If those structures remain essentially unchanged, then every election cycle will produce some version of the same script, with different actors playing slightly different roles.

What, then, does this foretell for 2027?



If the current trajectories hold if banditry and insurgency remain rampant, if hunger and unemployment continue to gnaw away at social stability, if northern grievances are left to fester, and if the opposition manages to cobble together a minimally coherent coalition 2027 could well resemble 2015 in one crucial respect: an incumbent facing a broad, emotionally charged, and regionally diverse rejection at the polls.

But there are also reasons to be cautious about neat historical parallels. The electorate has changed. A younger generation, radicalised by EndSARS and years of economic disappointment, is more sceptical of both establishment and "old opposition" figures. Trust in electoral institutions has been damaged in new ways, feeding a dangerous belief that votes do not count. Social media amplifies both accountability and disinformation at speeds unimaginable a decade ago. All of this means that even if the ingredients look familiar, the eventual dish may taste very different.

The most sobering possibility is that while 2015 delivered alternation in power, 2027 might provide something more ambiguous: either change without deep reform, or deepening apathy masked by the rituals of an election. The real risk is not just that one party loses and another wins; it is that ordinary Nigerians, having seen the same patterns recur, quietly conclude that democracy itself is incapable of altering the fundamentals of their lives.

If 2015 was Nigeria's proof that incumbents can fall, 2027 may be the test of whether we can do more than rotate the faces at the top while repeating the same underlying mistakes. The patterns are already visible. What we make of them, in the quiet decisions of today and the loud choices of election day, will determine whether 2027 becomes a turning point or just another rhyme in a poem we are too tired, or too timid, to rewrite.

Dakuku Peterside is the author of 2 new best-selling books, *Leading in a Storm* and *Beneath the Surface*.

 But there are also reasons to be cautious about neat historical parallels. The electorate has changed. 

be told without the formation of the All Progressives Congress, a merger of previously splintered opposition parties that gave discontent a single, credible vehicle. That coalition was far from ideologically coherent, but it was organisationally effective. Crucially, it rallied around one figure whose name, face, and reputation were already etched into the national consciousness: Muhammadu Buhari. For better or worse, he became the embodiment of the anti-incumbent mood.

Today, we are again hearing of opposition forces exploring a common front, with platforms such as the African Democratic Congress attracting interest as possible umbrellas for a grand alliance. Some of the same actors who were on opposite sides in 2015 or 2019 now sit in the same rooms, drafting communiqués to rescue democracy and prevent a slide into one-party dominance. The pattern is familiar: individual ambitions temporarily subordinated to the larger work of defeating an incumbent.

Yet there is a critical difference. There is no Buhari-like figure who naturally commands a cross-regional, cross-class

argue that the region is again bearing disproportionate costs – in blood, in disrupted education, and in disrupted agriculture – without seeing commensurate benefits in appointments, major infrastructure, or economic opportunities. They speak of targeted insecurity, stalled development projects, and a federal character principle observed more in rhetoric than in reality. In private conversations and public commentary, one hears echoes of 2015: "the North is being shortchanged."

Finally, there is the external lens – most visibly, the United States. In 2015, relations between Abuja and the Obama administration were noticeably cool. Disputes over arms sales, human rights, and anti-corruption efforts morphed into a narrative at home that Washington was quietly rooting against the incumbent. Whether or not that was entirely true, it became part of the political folklore of the era.

Today, under President Trump's second administration, there are again signs of friction. Statements about religious freedom, security failures, and governance standards have been sharper. Threats of sanctions and public criticism of Nigeria's

Entertainment

With
Akinrujomu
Gideon Oluwatobi



Wizkid's Unprecedented Success: Most-Streamed Nigerian Artist In 2025

Wizkid is having a phenomenal year, dominating the Nigerian music scene and beyond! He's been crowned the most-streamed Nigerian artist on Apple Music in 2025, with his album "Morayo" topping the charts in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Some of his notable achievements include:

Most-streamed Nigerian artist on Apple Music and Spotify in 2025

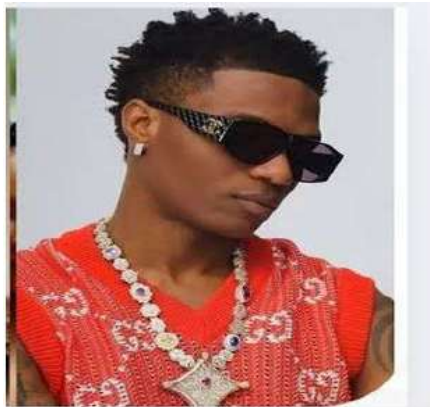
Top album in Sub-Saharan Africa: Morayo" has been a massive hit, with 25 of his tracks appearing on Nigeria's most-streamed songs list

Record-breaking streams: Morayo" has surpassed 435 million streams on Spotify as of November 2025

Radio dominance: His song "Kese (Dance)" has been a top performer on radio, with over 1.87 billion impressions

Collaborations galore: He's featured on hits like "MMS" with Asake and "Bad Girl" with Asake, showcasing his versatility and chemistry with other artists

Global recognition: Wizkid's influence extends beyond Nigeria, with his music resonating with listeners across Africa and worldwide, his success is a testament to his hard work, talent, and dedication to his craft. He's solidified his position as one of Afrobeats' most enduring global forces, his success is a testament to his hard work, talent, and dedication to his craft. He's solidified his position as one of Afrobeats' most enduring global forces.



Ayodeji Ibrahim Balogun

Protecting His Queen: Davido Defends Chioma Against Online Hate



Mr. and Mrs David Adeleke

Davido is getting a lot of love for standing up for his wife, Chioma, against online trolls.

It all started when someone made a negative comment about Chioma on Instagram, prompting Davido to fire back with a strong response, telling the troll to mind their business. In his response, Davido defended Chioma, saying, "Cho Cho Cho Cho Cho Cho... Do you even know what my wife is coming back from? Y'all just talk rubbish... you're not and

can never be as strong as her! Mind your business!" His reply quickly went viral, with many praising him for protecting his queen, this isn't the first time Davido has defended Chioma online. He's consistently shown his support for her, and it's clear they have a strong relationship. Chioma, who's known for her beauty and style, has also been open about her

personal life, sharing glimpses of her marriage and family with fans. Davido's actions have sparked a lot of positive reactions from fans, who appreciate him standing up for his wife. As one fan put it, "A real king protecting his Queen, he approach to handling online negativity is to let his success speak for itself. He said, "Me I no dey block... I wan make u dey see my doings... but I go curse your papa."

Portable's Snubbed By Olamide Singer Claims He Was Ignored Despite Contributing To 'zazuu'

Portable and Olamide are currently embroiled in a heated online feud. Portable has been vocal about feeling snubbed by Olamide, claiming he was ignored despite contributing to Olamide's song "Zazuu". Portable alleges Olamide signed Asake, who has since left YBNL, instead of him, and even stole his producer and dancer, in response, Olamide has remained relatively calm, with some interpreting his silence as a sign of confidence. Asake, however, has shown appreciation for Olamide, giving him a shoutout in his new song "Military", which has



Olamide Adeleke Adebite and Habeeb Okikiola Okunola

sparked comparisons between the two artists.

Portable has warned Olamide he'll regret not signing him, claiming divine favor and international

success. He's also praised Skepta, a British-Nigerian rapper, for supporting him when others didn't, the drama has sparked widespread debate, with fans taking sides and speculating about the impact on both artists' careers.

Portable's beef with Olamide is heating up! The Nigerian singer recently accused Olamide of signing Asake to sabotage him,

claiming Olamide stole his producer, dancer, and promoter instead of signing him to YBNL, Asake, who's been enjoying massive success, gave Olamide a shoutout in his new song "Military", sparking comparisons between him and Portable. Portable's been vocal about feeling snubbed by Olamide, saying he was more appreciative of the verse Olamide gave him on "Zazuu" than Asake was of Olamide's support, Olamide's responded with a calm message, urging Portable to "focus on his craft, not the drama". The feud's sparked debate among fans, with some backing Portable and others defending Olamide.

Foreign News

India-Russia Relations: Putin's Visit To Deepen Defense And Energy Cooperation

India and Russia are expected to discuss the procurement of additional S-400 air defense systems, Su-57 fighter jets, and other defense equipment, the two countries aim to increase bilateral trade to \$100 billion by 2030 with a focus on expanding Indian exports to Russia, including pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and food products.

Russia has offered India small modular reactors for nuclear energy, and discussions are expected on increasing Russian crude oil supplies to India, the visit marks the 25th anniversary of the India-Russia strategic partnership, with both countries committed to deepening their cooperation in defense, energy, and trade.

INDIA and RUSSIA have signed an agreement allowing Indian and Russian military aircraft and ships to use each other's facilities, both country are negotiating a free trade agreement with the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union.

Russia and India are exploring cooperation in civil nuclear energy, including the construction of small modular reactors, the visit is seen as a significant opportunity for India to strengthen its strategic partnership with Russia, while also navigating its relationships with other countries, including the United States.

TRADE AND ECONOMIC TIES

Bilateral trade between India and Russia reached \$68.7 billion in FY 2024-2025, the two countries aim to increase trade to \$100 billion by 2030.

India and Russia are exploring alternative payment mechanisms to bypass Western sanctions.



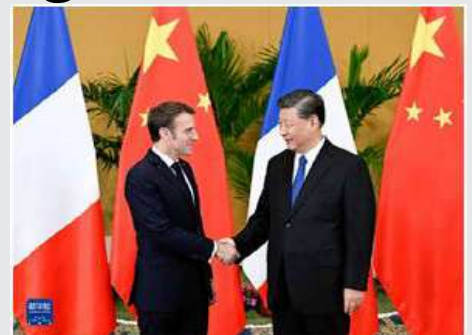
Russia-Ukraine Peace Talks: No Breakthrough Achieved

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with US President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner in Moscow on December 2, discussing a revised US peace plan to end the Ukraine war. The five-hour talks yielded no compromise on key issues, including Ukraine's territory and NATO membership, Putin accused European powers of sabotaging US efforts to broker peace, warning that Russia is ready to fight if Europe starts a war. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed concerns that the US and Russia might agree on terms compromising Ukraine's security or territorial integrity, the US presented a revised 19-point peace plan, which includes Ukraine ceding Crimea and Donbas to Russia and amending its constitution to exclude NATO membership. However, Ukraine rejects these terms, considering them a capitulation.

Ukraine's NATO membership

exclusion
 Russian control of Donbas and Crimea
 Restrictions on Ukraine's army
 Protection for Russian speakers in Ukraine
 Talks' Outcome:
 No compromise reached on territorial disputes
 Russia and US positions remain apart
 Talks described as "constructive" but with no breakthrough

The situation remains tense, with Russia advancing in eastern Ukraine and Ukraine pushing for a fair and transparent peace deal, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's special envoys, met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow to discuss a US peace plan for the Ukraine war. The meeting aimed to hammer out details of the plan, which has been a campaign promise of Trump's.



Witkoff and Kushner were chosen for their roles due to their success in brokering peace deals, including the Israel-Hamas ceasefire, Trump has expressed optimism about reaching a deal, while Putin has warned that Russia will continue advancing if Ukraine doesn't accept his conditions, the outcome of the meeting will determine the next steps in the peace process, with

brief Zelenskyy on the results, US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow to discuss a Ukraine peace plan. The talks, which lasted nearly five hours, were described as "constructive" and "productive," but no compromises were reached on key issues.

Sporting Ambassador



Countdown to 2025 AFCON: All the Stadia



Complexe Sportif Prince Moulay Abdellah (Rabat)

The African Cup of Nations will kick off in less than three weeks' time. Sporting Ambassador shines the spotlight on the magnificent temples of football set to welcome the continent's finest stars. These stadiums are not just structures, they are cathedrals where history will be written, dreams will be shattered, and new African heroes will rise.

Let's explore the architecture, the capacity, the atmosphere, and

the final — underlining its role as the tournament's premier arena.

Stade Annexe Olympique (Rabat)

The Stade Annexe Olympique is the purpose-built 21,000-seat auxiliary stadium within the Prince Moulay Abdellah complex. Completed rapidly and inaugurated in 2025, the annex was constructed to provide a FIFA-certified warm-up and match venue with a world-class 400m athletics track and modern support

movement and broadcast operations.

During AFCON it will host a cluster of group matches, notably Algeria's group fixtures and a round-of-16 tie; the stadium's compact design aims to deliver an intense match-day atmosphere.

Stade El Barid (Rabat)

Stade El Barid is Rabat's smaller stadium in the Agdal district, long

used for domestic matches and renovated to serve AFCON needs. With a capacity around 18,000, it retains a natural-grass pitch, improved VVIP/VIP areas and media stands, and benefits from upgraded spectator sightlines thanks to a sunken-pitch design.

El Barid will host a number of group-stage fixtures and at least one round-of-16 tie, offering



Grand Stade de Tanger / Ibn Battouta Stadium (Tangier)

a more intimate setting that suits nations and fixtures with compact travelling support.

Stade Mohammed V (Casablanca)

Stade Mohammed V is one of Africa's oldest and most iconic complexes, originally opened in 1955 and repeatedly refurbished across the

stadium was designed by international and Moroccan firms and has undergone subsequent upgrades to prepare for AFCON.

The Agadir ground is slated to host several prominent group fixtures, a round-of-16 match and one of the quarter-finals, making it one of the tournament's knockout-stage venues.

Complexe Sportif de Fès (Fès)

The Complexe Sportif de Fès has its origins in planning from the 1990s with construction completed in the early 2000s; after years of domestic use it received staged improvements to bring facilities up to CAF standards. The stadium seats roughly 45,000 and blends traditional Moroccan architectural elements with modern spectator and broadcast facilities.

Fès will host a cluster of high-interest group matches — notably Nigeria's group fixtures.

Grand Stade de Marrakech (Marrakech)

The Grand Stade de Marrakech

is a multi-use sports complex located north of Marrakech city centre and was developed to offer both football and athletics capacity with modern auxiliary facilities, including a 5,000-seat auxiliary stadium and a well-equipped media centre. The venue was completed in the 2010s and has since been maintained and upgraded for international events;

its seating is listed at about 45,240.

Marrakech will host a variety of group-stage fixtures and at least one round-of-16 and quarter-final match, providing a scenic, tourism-friendly match destination for travelling fans.

Grand Stade de Tanger / Ibn Battouta Stadium (Tangier)

The Grand Stade de Tanger (Ibn Battouta Stadium) opened in 2011 and was designed as a large, modern bowl to serve northern Morocco; it takes its name from the famed explorer Ibn Battuta. The stadium seats around 68,000 and underwent works and periodic upgrades in the years after opening to refine hospitality and broadcast amenities. Tangier will be a principal northern hub for AFCON 2025, hosting multiple group games, a round-of-16 tie, a quarter-final and a semi-final — underlining its capacity and logistical importance for late-stage fixtures.



Stade El Barid (Rabat)

the stories behind every stadium preparing to host the drama of AFCON 2025.

Complexe Sportif Prince Moulay Abdellah (Rabat)

The Complexe Sportif Prince Moulay Abdellah is Rabat's flagship venue and was comprehensively redeveloped in the run-up to AFCON 2025. The historic ground has been rebuilt and significantly modernised during 2023–2025 to meet FIFA/CAF standards, with the main stadium emerging as a football-only bowl after removal of its athletics track and extensive improvements to media, hospitality and broadcast infrastructure.

For AFCON 2025 the Prince Moulay Abdellah will host Morocco's opening match against Comoros, several group games and key knockout ties including a quarter-final, a semi-final and the

facilities such as TV studios, cryotherapy rooms and underground parking. It will stage several group-stage fixtures across the tournament including Tunisia vs Uganda and is designed to support tournament logistics while showcasing Morocco's strategy of concentrated, high-quality venues in the capital.

Complexe Sportif Prince Héritier Moulay El Hassan (Rabat)

Built on the historic site associated with FUS Rabat, the Prince Héritier Moulay El Hassan stadium is a new-generation urban arena seating around 22,000. Finished as part of Rabat's multi-stadium approach for AFCON 2025, the venue features a glazed terracotta façade inspired by Berber motifs, multiple hospitality levels, VIP boxes and dedicated media and security command centres to streamline crowd

decades. The complex underwent a significant rehabilitation programme to remove the athletics track, extend and modernise stands, and upgrade media and VIP facilities to contemporary

international standards.

For AFCON 2025 Mohammed V will host eight matches, including several high-profile group



Grand Stade de Marrakech (Marrakech)

Abia State Holds First Tertiary Education Sports Fiesta

By Okereke Kate, Chinaza Ansa Onyema & Joseph Jacob

The maiden edition of the Abia State Tertiary Education Sports Fiesta (ASTEAF 2025) came to a colourful and uplifting close at the weekend, rounding off four days of intense competition, unity and celebration among the state's higher institutions.

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU), emerged overall champions with an impressive haul of 87 medals, reaffirming its sporting dominance in the state.

Declaring the fiesta open earlier in the week, the Governor of Abia State – represented by the Deputy Governor, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu – reiterated the administration's unwavering commitment to youth development, talent discovery and inclusion.

"From this field," the Deputy Governor said, "will emerge

national heroes, continental champions and Olympians."

In her welcome address, the Honourable Commissioner for Tertiary Education, Prof. Uche Eme-Uche, highlighted the significance of the event's theme, "Compete, Unite, Conquer," which she said captures the spirit of the New Abia.

"This fiesta," she noted, "is the first of its kind, bringing together students from every corner of our tertiary education ecosystem. It reflects our belief that education must go beyond the classroom, nurturing the body as much as the mind."

She also commended the Governor for his steadfast support for education and youth development, describing the fiesta as a testament to his youth-focused governance.

Similarly, the Commissioner for Sports and Youth



Abia State Deputy Gov. Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu declaring the sports fiesta opened

and celebrate the talents of Abia youth.

"We began this journey with renewed energy through the statewide sports festival – the Abia State Governor's Secondary School Unity Games – deliberately building a pipeline of talent from the grassroots to our schools. Today's event is a continuation of that vision," he said.

The four-day fiesta lived up to expectations, featuring some of the finest young athletes from tertiary institutions across the state competing for glory in 22 major sporting activities, including athletics, kickboxing, chess, wrestling, judo, football and racket games.

MOUUAU topped the medal table with 51 gold, 30 silver and six bronze medals. Gregory University, Uтуру (GUU) finished second with 45 gold, 11 silver and eight bronze, while Ogonnaya Onu Polytechnic

secured third place with 31 gold, 16 silver and 24 bronze medals.

Delivering the closing address on behalf of the Governor, the Chief of Staff, Pastor Caleb Ajagba, praised participating schools for

true victory of the fiesta went beyond the medal count.

"While we celebrate our medal winners, remember that this event is not merely about gold, silver, or bronze," he said. "It is about forging unbreakable bonds of unity, understanding and shared purpose among the future leaders of our state."

He acknowledged the role of the Students' Union Governments (SUGs) in representing the collective voice of students and expressed gratitude to the Governor for initiating a project that bridges the gap between tertiary institutions. He prayed for the continuity of the fiesta in future editions.

The Commissioner for Tertiary Education and the Special Adviser to the Governor on Tertiary Institutions also commended the seamless organisation of the event and the impressive standards displayed by student-athletes.

Speaking at the sidelines of the closing ceremony, the President of the Ogonnaya Onu Polytechnic SUG, Comr. Ifeanyi Michael



L-R: Abia Comm. for Tertiary Educ, Prof Uche Emech Uche, Chief of Staff to Abia Gov, Pastor Caleb Ajagba, Ph.D, Comm. for Arts, Culture and the Creative Econ, Mr Matthew Ekwuribe and Rector, Ogonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba, Engr. Dr. Christopher Kalu Okoro pose with the champions, Michael Okpara Univ. of Agric, Umudike.

SUDOKU

Puzzle By: Prince Blessing Lazarus

Development, Sir Nwaobilor Ananaba, emphasised that one of the state government's core mandates is to identify, nurture

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5				6			
		6		4			2

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.



Match past by participants

their discipline and sportsmanship, stressing that the

Maduka, expressed profound appreciation to the Rector, Engr. Dr. Christopher Kalu Okoro, whom he described as a major source of motivation for the athletes. He praised the Sports Department for their discipline and commitment, and lauded the SUG Director of Sports, Comr. Benneth Precious Hart, for fulfilling his promise of securing a trophy for the institution. Maduka encouraged the athletes to build on their success and aim even higher in future competitions.

The maiden ASTEF 2025 has now set a strong foundation for a tradition of sporting excellence, unity and youth empowerment in Abia State.



Chief of Staff to Abia Gov, Pastor Caleb Ajagba, Ph.D, decorating Gregory University, Uтуру.