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# NATIONAL Ambassador

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"Uplift the people, project the nation"

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## Otti's Administration Is Committed To Welfare Of Abia Workforce – Commissioner

By Kelechi Eme-Ogidi

The Abia state Commissioner for Finance, Mr Uwaoma Ukandu, has stated that the current administration, under the leadership of Dr. Alex Otti, remains fully committed to the welfare of its workforce, by resolving to qué into a pension scheme that guarantees dignity, peace of mind and financial security of its workers both in service and in retirement.

The commissioner, who is also the chairman, Abia state Pension Transition Committee, disclosed this while declaring open a Sensitization/Enlightenment programme on the beginning of the implementation of the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), for Abia State public servants held recently in Umuahia.

Ukandu, who said that the programme was very important to ensure that Abia public servants are well informed and adequately prepared to embrace the benefits of the scheme, informed the audience that the CPS, which was launched in 2004 at the federal level by the administration of former President Obasanjo is designed to ensure, that every worker is guaranteed timely access to his/her retirement benefits in a sustainable manner.'

This sensitisation programme is, therefore, strategically timely to provide an opportunity for our Civil Servants to gain a better understanding of what the CPS is all about, its operations, the benefits and the transition processes of the scheme. It will further provide a platform for addressing facts and clarifying misconceptions that may arise', he further stated.

Highlighting the uniqueness of the Abia CPS, the commissioner, disclosed that like every other initiative of Dr. Otti, the Abia CPS is unique as the Abia State Government Pension Reform Law 2024, has inbuilt safeguards to ensure that employers and employees contributions are not only made but promptly remitted to the Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs).

'The law also empowers the pension board to independently deduct as a first line charge and remit the deductions should the state fail to do so. This is the first state that is doing so, what this guarantees is that even after this administration, subsequent administrations will not be allowed to deduct and withhold these deductions which is what is seen in many other states. The safeguards will also ensure that we will not only start well but that it continues', he stated.

The commissioner, also noted that the present administration on assumption of office in May 2023, inherited backlog of unpaid salaries, pensions and gratuities which it has offsetted, and that the implementation of Contributory Pension Scheme in the state will ensure that the issues of arrears of gratuities or pension will not re-occur again..

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## People React Over Christmas Celebration In Abia

By Stephanie Okoroafor

Christmas celebrations in Abia State in 2025 were marked by a blend of modest festivity, renewed hope, and cautious optimism, as residents reflected on governance under the administration of Governor Alex Otti. Across cities, towns, and rural

communities, the season was less about extravagant displays and more about gratitude, family bonding, and appreciation for improved stability in the state.

From Umuahia to Aba, markets bustled with activity in the days leading to Christmas, though many residents noted that celebrations were shaped by

prevailing economic realities across the country. Still, there was a visible sense of order, security, and calm that many Abians described as a notable improvement compared to previous years.

An Aba-based businessman, Mr. Chimezie Onyema, noted that one of the most common impressions shared by

residents was the relative peace and security that characterised Abia at the Christmas period.

He added that churches reported high attendance at carol services and Christmas Day worship, while community events and family gatherings were conducted without major security concerns.

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Gov. Alex Otti of Abia waving at the crowd, during the commissioning of the Abia Electric Shuttle Buses by Abia Gov. at Int'l Conference Center, Umuahia.

## Governor Otti Launches First State-Owned Electric Bus Service

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State has officially launched the First Phase of the Abia Green Shuttle electric bus Service, with the unveiling of 20 Electric Buses for public transportation as part of the

State's drive towards sustainable, efficient and modern urban transportation.

The buses, which are part of the State's effort to reduce carbon emissions and promote eco-friendly

transportation, will offer free rides to commuters, and are expected to ply major routes in the State including Umuahia, Aba, Umunneochi, Ohafia, Ukwu Local government areas.

Governor Otti, who

announced this at the commissioning ceremony, held at the International Conference Centre, Umuahia, described the initiative as a bold step towards the future and a deliberate move to align the State, with global climate and sustainability goals.

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EDITORIAL:

Abia's Renewed Path Under Governor Alex Otti

## News

### People react over Xmas

*Continued from page 1*

Contributing, a mini bus driver, Mr. Obinna Eze, acknowledged improved road conditions on major routes, especially within Aba and Umuahia, which eased travel for those returning home for the holidays. He described smoother intra-state movement, attributing it to ongoing road rehabilitation and traffic management efforts by the state government.

Meanwhile, a civil servant in Abia State, Mrs. Ifeyinwa Nwogu, noted that the 2025 Christmas carried special significance following the payment of 13th month salaries by the Governor Alex Otti's led-administration. This, she insisted that workers described the gesture as timely and morale-boosting, enabling them to meet family obligations and participate meaningfully in the festivities despite rising costs of living.

Fielding questions from the National Ambassador, a Teacher in the state, Mr. Peter Nwankwo, noted that while the economy remains challenging nationwide, the consistency in salary payments and the Christmas bonus reflected a level of fiscal responsibility they had long desired in Abia.

According to some workers who pleaded anonymity, the gesture reinforced trust in government and restored a sense of dignity to public service, even as they called for continued efforts to cushion inflationary pressures.

Information gathered, revealed that markets across Abia witnessed moderate activity, with traders acknowledging that while patronage improved slightly compared to previous years, many households opted for scaled-down celebrations. Prices of food items and livestock remained high, prompting families to prioritise essentials and shared meals over lavish spending.

Despite this, traders in Ariaria International Market, Aba and Umuahia; Mrs. Chisom Dike and Mrs. Benedicta Awomukwu Ignoh, respectively said the festive season brought a welcome boost in sales, particularly in clothing, foodstuffs, and household items. Some traders credited improved environmental sanitation and market orderliness for creating a better shopping atmosphere.

### Otti Launches First State-Owned Electric Bus Service

*Contd. from page 1*

The governor said the project, which began as a plan to procure Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses, was deliberately upgraded to electric vehicles, in line with the world's transition towards net-zero emissions.

He explained that although CNG buses are cleaner, they still emit carbon, which prompted the state to "leapfrog" into full electrification.

"Today is a special day for us in Abia State as it defines our movement towards the future. Like has been explained, the journey started with Compressed Natural Gas powered buses. But then we had in mind the target that the world is headed towards and that is net zero emission.

"We knew that even though CNGs are cleaner gases, they are also not without emissions. And we thought we should leapfrog and go to electric buses", Governor Otti added.

The governor disclosed that the procurement process encountered challenges, including the need to redesign the buses to make them compliant with the needs of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs).

"At some point we realised that they were not PWD compliant and we had to start afresh to ensure that they were built in. And I can announce today that the 20 electric buses here are PWD compliant", he said.

Governor Otti further revealed that the project was nearly stalled due to delays in the delivery of charging infrastructure after the vessel conveying them suffered a mid-sea accident, but said the state successfully improvised.

"So we now had to put on our thinking caps and somehow we found a solution. And today we have charging stations here. We are expecting a few more", he stated.

According to him, the buses will begin scheduled operations immediately, with free rides for commuters until January, as part of efforts to familiarise residents with the new system.

The governor who warned that misconduct would be tracked through onboard surveillance cameras, also announced plans to install public charging stations across Aba, Umuahia and other parts of the State.

## FG Reaffirms Commitment To Hosting WPRT2026

*From Sophina Ovuike, Abuja*

**T**he Federal Government has reiterated its unwavering commitment to hosting the 2026 World Public Relations Forum (WPRF), branding the event as a strategic platform to advance Nigeria's global communication footprint and showcase responsible narrative leadership.

Speaking recently at a media parley held at the Nicon Luxury Hotel in Abuja, the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris Malagi,

underscored the government's support for preparations toward the global gathering scheduled for November 15-21, 2026, themed; "Responsible Communication: The Voice of the World."

Idris revealed that the Tinubu-led administration is mobilising resources, policy frameworks, and inter-agency collaboration to ensure that WPRF 2026 is delivered to world-class standards. He said the forum presents a timely opportunity for Nigeria to drive global discourse on ethical communication, rebuild public trust through

transparent engagement, and project a positive national image.

The communication boss highlighted the role of responsible communication in confronting misinformation, strengthening democratic values, and fostering social cohesion in an era where information flows rapidly across borders.

He said the event will amplify Nigeria's narrative leadership and position the country as a hub for strategic public relations in Africa and beyond.

Meanwhile, the President and Chairman of Council of the Nigerian

Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Dr. Ike Neliaku, expressed gratitude for the ministry's support and called on Nigerian communicators to leverage the forum to redefine global narratives about Nigeria.

Other dignitaries at the event included the Vice-President of NIPR, Prof. Emmanuel Dandaura, along with industry leaders and PR practitioners charged with co-ordinating the national rollout of WPRF initiatives. The forum is expected to draw delegates and thought leaders from over 120 countries, offering workshops, high-level panels, and networking events that highlight best practices in strategic communication.

### Emede Youth Association Elects New Executive Members

*By Pious Jacob*

**M**embers of the Emede Youth Association (EYA), recently held their general election at Umueze Civic Hall, Emede Ibeku, in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State.

The election marked a unique moment in the history of the association, as the newly elected president, Hon. Uzodinma Nwoko, comes from Agbo Community, which has never produced a president of the association before.

Earlier, the chairman of the electoral committee, Mr. Tobechi Iroanya, thanked members for their strong support during the committee's three to four months in office. He urged members to vote wisely so that credible leaders could emerge.

He explained that only four members picked interest forms to contest for four different positions. He then asked the house whether the election should go on, and members unanimously agreed

that the election must be held, as it was constitutional.

All four aspirants passed through accreditation, while 10 members were accredited to vote.

After the voting, the results were announced as follows:

President Hon. Uzodinma Nwoko (Agbo Emede Ibeku) 9 votes.

Secretary: Mr. Ugochukwu Obilor (Udide Emede) 9 votes.

Financial Secretary Mr. Lucky Ogechi Ignatius (Ubani Emede) 8 votes.

Treasurer: Mr. Okwudiri Emmanuel Ogwuegbu (Agbo Emede) 9 votes.

Following the results, the Electoral Committee Chairman, Mr. Tobechi Iroanya, declared all four candidates winners, stating that they met all the requirements and were duly elected as the new EYA executive members.

In a vote of thanks, the newly elected president, Hon. Nwoko, speaking on behalf of the executive, thanked members for the confidence shown in them. He promised that his administration would

### Otti's Administration Is Committed To Welfare Of Abia Workforce — Commissioner

*Contd. from page 1*

In his remarks, the Head of Service, Abia State, Mr. Benson Ojeikere, represented by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Productivity, Dim Clara Ijeoma, reiterated that the implementation of the CPS underscores the commitment of the present Administration to the welfare of its workforce.

He also applauded Gov. Otti for demonstrating uncommon political will by assenting to the CPS law, thereby providing a solid legal framework for its full implementation.

Ojeikere assured civil servants that the government remains fully committed to protecting their future citing the CPS as a transparent and sustainable system to guarantee comfort and stability in retirement.

"The issue of pension administration is one that directly affects the welfare, dignity, and peace of mind of every worker. As civil servants, we devoted the prime years of our lives to public service, and it is only right that there is a secure, transparent and sustainable system in place to guarantee comfort and stability in retirement.

The CPS was established to address the challenges that plagued the old defined benefit system, such as delayed payments, accumulated arrears and lack of proper funding. CPS ensures that every employee actively saves towards retirement, with contributions made jointly by the employer and the employee, and professionally managed by licensed Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) under strict regulation", he further said.

A representative from the National Pension Commission (PENCOM), Sandra Igboke, presented an 'Overview of the CPS implementation in Nigeria, highlighting its Benefits, safeguards, stages, Rights of Contributors, Functions of PFAs, Roles of PENCOM, Retiring under the scheme and so on.

In her vote of thanks, the Perm. Sec, Ministry of Finance, Mrs. Obi-Chiankwalam Elechi, appreciated Governor Otti, for implementing the CPS in the state. She urged all Abia civil servants to embrace the scheme, as it will ensure that

Representatives of PENCOM, selected PFAs, Public servants and other stakeholders in Pension Administration in the state aimed to educate Abia workers on the scheme's benefits and operations, addressing misconceptions and providing clarity.

#### Change of Name

I, formerly known and addressed as Miss Nhubuisi Ruth Ifeoma, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. EJIMONYEABALA RUTH IFEOMA. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note.

EJIMONYEABALA  
RUTH IFEOMA



Ibeku Youth Vice President, Chief Charles Enyinnaya Sampson (Extreme Right), Swearing in the newly elected Executive of EYA, recently at Umueze Civic Hall, Emede Ibeku Umuahia.

## News

# Kingdom Bible College Of The Word Graduates 368 Ministers

By Favour Okorie

Excitement and jubilation filled the air as the Kingdom Bible College of the Word graduated 368 ministers at its 2025 Newbreed Ministership ceremony, held at the Church Auditorium in Abam-Onyerubi, Arochuku Local Government Area of Abia State.

Addressing the gathering, the Registrar of the College, Reverend Dr. Emmanuel Ukoha, said the



A cross-section of the Students at Kingdom Bible College of the Word Foundation, Main Campus Ozu-Abam, during their Women Ministership Education of Kingdom Bible College of the Word Foundation, Main Campus Ozu-Abam, Arochuku LGA of Abia State.

meaningful impacts in society.

Speaking with journalists at the event, the member who represented Ohafia and Arochuku Federal Constituency at the National Assembly, Chief Uko Nkole, attributed the success of the Newbreed Ministership programme to dedication, resilience, hard work, and commitment. He commended Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Ukoha for his unwavering support for youth development and empowerment.

Chief Nkole charged the graduates to remain mindful of the purpose of their training, stressing that self-sustaining skills serve as a safeguard against worldly lusts, unethical practices, and dependency. He encouraged them to transit from job seekers to job creators and to use their skills to sustain themselves and employ others.

Some of the graduates, in interviews, described Rev. Ukoha as a blessing to humanity, while also describing the training as life-changing. They cited renewed confidence, deeper understanding of their divine calling, and the acquisition of practical skills capable of transforming their lives. The event climaxed with the presentation of certificates to the graduates, marking a significant milestone in their ministerial journey. The organisers reaffirmed their commitment to raising Spirit-filled, mission-ready ministers and called on churches to support and recognise the vital role of young people in advancing the gospel. The intensive programme featured teachings on Biblical doctrines, evangelism, church administration, spiritual growth, and personal development, while also providing platforms for mentoring, prayers.



Some of the School Agronomy being displayed, during the Woman Ministership Education of Kingdom Bible College of the Word Foundation, Main Campus Ozu-Abam, Arochuku LGA of Abia State.

institution is committed to raising a new generation of Kingdom men—gospel ministers who are spiritually grounded, professionally trained, and equipped with practical life skills to serve God beyond human limitations.

According to Rev. Ukoha, the Newbreed ministers are trained in the pattern of the Apostles and Prophets, with a strong emphasis on independence and self-sustainability.

According to him, "our focus is not the formation of denominational churches, we operate a fellowship-based school system centred on gospel education. Our students are enrolled into departments where they acquire relevant skills alongside ministerial training."

He disclosed that the College has so far trained and empowered 458 ministers across three batches: Batch A with 34 participants, Batch B with 56, and Batch C with 368 graduates. He described the achievement as a clear testament to the institution's mission of raising spiritually sound ministers for the end-time harvest.

The Registrar further noted that the College offers courses in building, engineering and construction, agronomy and crop cultivation, as well as ministerial studies in the arts and sciences of the Word.

He urged the graduates to deploy both their spiritual and practical skills early in life, preach the true gospel, and make



L-R: GM, Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Hon. Jones Ike, The Registrar, Kingdom Bible College of the Word Foundation, Main Campus Ozu-Abam, Arochuku LGA of Abia State, Rev Dr. Emmanuel Ukoha and A Correspondent, Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Mrs Okorie Favour, during a visit to Kingdom Bible College of the Word Foundation Main Campus Ozu-Abam

## News

# 2027: Anyone Can Contest Abia Governorship Position, But Be Ready For Defeat – LP Chairman

By Okereke Kate

**T**he Chairman of the Labour Party (LP) in Abia State, Sir Emmanuel Otti, has declared that the 2027 governorship race is open to all aspirants. He, however, stated that anyone seeking to challenge Governor Alex Otti should be prepared for defeat, citing what he described as the governor's outstanding performance in office.

Sir Otti made the assertion while speaking with journalists in Umuahia, noting that Governor Otti's achievements within a short period had set a standard that would be difficult for any contender to match.

According to him, the administration of Governor Otti has recorded remarkable progress across key sectors, including health care, road infrastructure, and education and others.

He explained that the governor had delivered quality health facilities and constructed critical road networks across the state, while also revolutionising the education sector through the introduction of smart schools across the 17 local government areas of Abia State.

Otti added that while some of the smart school projects had already been completed, several others are still ongoing, underscoring the administration's commitment to long-term development.

The Labour Party chairman further stated that within just two years of the current administration, Abians have begun to enjoy the dividends of democracy in a manner that, according to him, previous administrations over a span of 24 years failed to deliver.

"We have witnessed rapid and visible changes in Abia State. What we are experiencing today aligns with the Biblical scripture that says, 'When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.' Governor Alex Otti is a God-fearing leader, and his



Sir Emmanuel Otti,

actions continue to affirm that scripture", he said.

Recounting the activities of the Labour Party in 2025, the chairman disclosed that the party successfully embarked on a statewide tour of the 17 local

government areas, aimed at engaging directly with grassroots communities.

He explained that the exercise, tagged the "Sensitization and Evaluation Tour," was designed to identify community challenges

and bring governance closer to the people.

According to him, the initiative brought renewed hope and excitement to residents, many of whom, he noted, had never previously had the opportunity to

directly interact with political leaders. He added that the tour started across the three senatorial zones of the state, with Bende Local Government Area, remaining the only area yet to be visited.

Sir Otti also urged media practitioners in Abia State, to uphold professionalism by reporting events truthfully and objectively. He stressed that journalists should not shield wrongdoing, but rather present facts accurately in the interest of transparency and accountability.

He called on Abians to continue to support the administration of Governor Otti and to rally behind his re-election bid in 2027. He described Governor Otti as a leader, who deserves a second term, to consolidate on the gains already recorded.

## Fubara Urges Supporters To Back Tinubu's Re-election In 2027

From Nzeuzor Jane and  
Maduadugwo Jane, PH

**R**ivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has urged his supporters to rally behind President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2027 re-election bid, describing it as a collective responsibility ahead of the next general election.

The governor made the call recently during the inauguration of the Ogbakiri Roundabout-Ogbakiri Waterfront Road in Emohua Local Government Area of the state.

Governor Fubara disclosed that he recently held a strategic meeting with the National Working Committee (NWC) of the All Progressives Congress (APC), during which he assured party leaders of growing grassroots support for President Tinubu across Rivers State.

He described the President's re-election as a major assignment and said

mobilisation efforts had already started at the grassroots. According to him, the large turnout of residents at the road commissioning was evidence that significant progress had been made. He noted that about 70 per cent of the mobilisation work in the area had been achieved.

"We know you are hardworking and that you enjoy organic support. What we need now is to channel this support towards the success of our leader, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu," Fubara said. "What truly matters is having the right foot soldiers on ground."

Speaking on the newly inaugurated road, the governor described the Ogbakiri project as a landmark achievement, recalling that it was initiated at one of the most challenging periods of his administration. He revealed that the first payment for the project was made when the state was under a court order restricting access to

federal allocations.

Despite the challenges, Fubara said his administration remained committed to delivering on its promises, expressing confidence that perseverance and faith would prevail. He added that the completed road stands as proof of his government's dedication to service delivery.

The governor also acknowledged requests from the Council of Chiefs, including the construction of internal roads and a proposed bridge to enhance transportation, security and commercial activities. He assured that the requests would be carefully reviewed and addressed after proper cost assessment.

Commending the host community, Fubara noted that peace and co-operation were critical to the successful execution of the project. He observed that Ogbakiri, once associated with frequent crises, has embraced peace, creating

room for development.

Fubara stressed that peace remains the foundation for sustainable development in Rivers State. He urged residents to protect public institutions, including universities and other government facilities, noting that they exist for the benefit of the people.

Providing technical details, the Permanent Secretary, Rivers State Ministry of Works, Dr. Austin Ezekiel-Hart, said the road project, awarded in September 2024, spans 9.7 kilometres with a width of 7.3 metres. He added that it features solar-powered streetlights, 4.5 kilometres of reinforced concrete drainage, and reinforced concrete culverts at strategic locations.

In his remarks, the Chairman of Emohua Local Government Area, Dr. Chidi Lloyd, commended Governor Fubara for fulfilling his promise. He described the road as a major boost to mobility, economic activities and overall development in the

Abia Inaugurates  
Emergency  
Committees in  
17 Councils

By Ndubueze Ngozi

**T**he Abia State Government has officially inaugurated the Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs) in all 17 local government areas of the state. The inauguration took place at the Aguiyi Ironsi Conference Centre, Umuahia.

Speaking on behalf of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), the Executive Secretary of the Abia State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Dr. Sunny Jackson, said the initiative is aimed at strengthening disaster preparedness and response mechanisms at the grassroots level. He charged members of the committees to immediately swing into action.

He noted that the establishment of functional LEMCs is a requirement of the Federal Government, adding that committee members will undergo training in emergency report writing to enhance their effectiveness. He stressed that their responsibilities are continuous and that proactive engagement in emergency preparedness is critical to risk mitigation and timely response.

In a goodwill message, the Director-General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), represented by the Head of Operations, Mr. Igwe Nnamdi, emphasised the importance of community participation in disaster management. He described emergency management as a collective responsibility that requires collaboration at all levels.

Also present at the event were representatives of key security and emergency response agencies. The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), represented by Mr. Kenneth Onyeocha on behalf of the State Commandant, Mrs. Ngozi Uzoma; the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), represented by Mr. A. C. Onuegbu; and the Nigerian Red Cross Society, represented by Mr. Okerie Victor, all pledged their commitment to supporting SEMA in ensuring prompt and coordinated emergency response.

# Editorial

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## Abia's Renewed Path Under Governor Alex Otti

As the year 2025 unfolds, governance in Abia State continues to attract national attention, largely due to the visible and people-focused leadership of Governor Alex Chioma Otti. In a political environment where public trust is often strained, the Otti administration has distinguished itself through measurable actions, strategic planning, and a renewed commitment to democratic dividends. These achievements not only deserve accolades but also sustained public support to ensure continuity and deeper impact.

One of the most symbolic recognitions of Governor Otti's governance came with his designation as Man of the Year 2025 by the Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA). This honour reflects more than personal acclaim; it underscores a broader acknowledgment that Abia State is undergoing a historic reversal from years of infrastructural decay and administrative drift to purposeful and accountable governance. Commendations from lawmakers, civil society leaders, and public commentators further reinforce the growing consensus that Abia is on a progressive path.

Infrastructure development has remained a cornerstone of this transformation. The completion and commissioning of major road projects, most notably the 67.6-kilometre Umuahia-Uzuakoli-Abiriba-Ohafia Road (Joe Irukwa Way), has significantly improved connectivity across the state. Beyond easing transportation, these roads unlock economic opportunities, facilitate trade, and enhance social integration among communities. Complementing this effort is the state's N750 billion 2025 budget, which prioritises capital expenditure, particularly in roads, water infrastructure, and urban renewal. This reflects a deliberate shift from reactive governance to structured economic planning.

Education reform under Governor Otti has also been both ambitious and inclusive. His administration reaffirmed its commitment to free and compulsory basic and secondary education, while initiating plans to convert selected schools into modern smart schools. The recruitment of 5,394 teachers and the payment of their logistics allowances demonstrate not only investment in human capital but also respect for educators as drivers of long-term development. Particularly commendable is the empowerment of 150 outstanding graduates of Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, each

supported with grants to pursue entrepreneurship. This initiative sends a powerful message to young people that excellence, innovation, and hard work are valued in Abia State.

The establishment and graduation of 1,000 youths from the Abia Leadership Academy further underscore the administration's forward-looking vision. By equipping young citizens with leadership and civic skills, the government is deliberately planting the seeds for responsible future leadership and community development.

Healthcare delivery has witnessed a notable revival. The functional upgrade of over 100 Primary Health Centres across rural and urban communities has improved access to essential healthcare services, particularly for women, children, and the elderly. Investments in tertiary institutions such as the Abia State Specialist Hospital and ABSUTH, Aba, have restored confidence in the public health system. It is therefore not surprising that Abia State has earned recognition as one of Nigeria's most prepared states for health emergencies—an achievement rooted in system strengthening rather than rhetoric.

Economic growth and innovation have equally received attention. Through strategic partnerships with multilateral organisations and development agencies, the state has expanded its social protection programmes, energy initiatives, and investment opportunities. Policies supporting small and medium-scale enterprises, technology, and research are gradually repositioning Abia as a hub for sustainable, science-led development.

Perhaps one of the most visionary steps taken in 2025 is the unveiling of the Abia 2050 Development Blueprint, a 25-year roadmap that places planning at the heart of governance. In a country where short-term political cycles often override long-term thinking, this initiative stands out as a commitment to intergenerational development.

Beyond infrastructure and policy, Governor Otti's decision to pay 13th month salaries to Abia civil servants deserves special mention. At a time of economic pressure nationwide, this gesture not only boosted workers' morale but also stimulated the local economy during the festive season. It reaffirmed the administration's belief that workers' welfare is central to effective governance.

In light of these achievements, it is imperative for all Abians, across political, ethnic, and social divides to offer constructive support to this administration. Democracy thrives when citizens actively engage, hold leaders accountable, and also acknowledge progress where it exists. Sustained public support will enable Governor Alex Otti to consolidate gains, deepen reforms, and deliver even greater democratic dividends.

Abia State is clearly on a journey of renewal. Protecting and advancing this progress is a collective responsibility.

## Need To Spend Wisely This Festive Season

Dear Editor,

Permit me to use your widely read medium to inform your esteemed readers of the need to spend their money wisely this festive season.

The end of the year is always a significant period across the country, and in the South-East in particular. People from all walks of life return home to reunite with loved ones they may not have seen for a long time. Families take advantage of this period to hold meetings and make plans and resolutions for the coming year.

Communities also engage in fundraising and the launching of various community development projects. Couples see this season as the most favourable time to tie the nuptial knot, hence the prevalence of wedding ceremonies and igbankwu celebrations. In addition, many families choose this period to bury their departed loved ones before the New Year. There are also age-grade meetings, social club gatherings and other related events, not forgetting the popular crossover night.

Unfortunately, many people view this season as an opportunity to show off by spraying money at events, hosting lavish parties and engaging in excessive spending. Family heads and parents are often under immense pressure to purchase expensive clothes, jewellery, shoes, hairstyles, bags and other luxury items for their wives and children, simply to keep up appearances. As an Igbo adage says, he who is not like others feels like crying.

Granted, individuals are free to spend their money as they wish. However, many go beyond their means merely to impress others and compete unnecessarily.

While indulging in festive spending, there are inevitable realities that must not be overlooked. For those whose house rents are due at the beginning of the year, landlords will be waiting patiently, and excuses of having exhausted one's funds during the festivities will not suffice.

Furthermore, children will be returning to school—whether nursery, primary, secondary or tertiary institutions—and school fees and other expenses must be paid promptly to avoid the embarrassment of having them sent home. For salary earners, exhausting the December salary during the festivities often means starting the New Year with empty pockets and waiting almost another month for the January salary. This perhaps explains why many describe January as the longest month of the year.

Car owners will need to fuel their vehicles, while those who rely on public transportation must also remember the cost of commuting to work or business. Spouses and children will equally need transport to their respective workplaces and schools. Excessive spending in December does not eliminate the need for food in January, nor does it rule out unforeseen medical expenses that may arise.

In view of these realities, prudence and wisdom should guide our spending this season. First, one must resolve to live within one's means and resist the urge to impress others. Those who applaud you today may be nowhere to be found when you are in need tomorrow.

Money spraying is a crime in Nigeria. Rather than engaging in such acts, it is more sensible to place one's modest donation in an envelope and present it to the host. This not only discourages unhealthy competition but also reduces the risk of attracting criminals. It is also important to accept that one cannot attend every event one is invited to. Selecting only essential engagements and politely declining others is both wise and necessary.

Moderation in eating and drinking is equally important during this season. Overindulgence may result in health challenges, leading to avoidable medical expenses.

Second, the Bible in Proverbs 15:22 rightly states: "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." Families should therefore come together to plan how best to manage their finances during the festivities, in order to avoid financial distress in January. Such planning helps children understand financial limitations and appreciate what their parents can afford, while also reducing tension between couples.

It is also advisable to set aside a substantial amount of money in a separate bank account to be reserved strictly for January, regardless of circumstances. This will serve as a financial cushion during the typically challenging period that follows the festive season.

It is my hope that these suggestions will guide individuals and families towards wiser financial decisions as we usher in 2026 in sound financial standing.

Regina Nneoma Onoh  
Aba



## Abuja Digest

with Sophina Ovuike  
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### Lawmakers Review 2026-2028 MTEF/FSP, Seek Stronger Fiscal Sustainability

**T**he House of Representatives has recently held an interactive session on the 2026-2028 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and Fiscal Strategy Paper (FSP), as part of efforts to strengthen fiscal sustainability and ensure prudent economic planning.

The session, jointly organised by the House Committees on Finance and on National Planning and Economic Development, was chaired by the Chairman of the Committee on Finance, Rt. Hon. James Abiodun Faleke, alongside his

counterpart on National Planning and Economic Development, Rep. Gboyega Nasir Isiaika.

Top officials of the Executive Arm of Government were in attendance, including the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun; the Minister of Budget and National Planning, Senator Atiku Abubakar Bagudu; and the Accountant-General of the Federation, Mr. Shamsudeen Babatunde Ogunjimi.

Also present were representatives of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) and other relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

During the session, the ministers and heads of agencies made detailed presentations on the macroeconomic assumptions, revenue projections and policy priorities underpinning the 2026-2028 fiscal framework.

Lawmakers engaged the Executive on key issues, including the realism of revenue projections, strategies for boosting the performance of revenue-generating agencies, fiscal deficit management, debt sustainability and the alignment of macroeconomic assumptions with prevailing economic conditions.

Members of the Committees stressed the importance of transparency, credible benchmarks and effective implementation mechanisms to ensure that projected economic gains translate into tangible improvements in the living standards of Nigerians.

At the end of the engagement, the Committees resolved to further scrutinise the submissions and consolidate their observations into a comprehensive report.

The report, when finalised, will be laid before the House at plenary for consideration and approval, in line with constitutional provisions making the MTEF a statutory requirement for the preparation and passage of the 2026 Appropriation Bill.

### Wike Reinstates FCTA Education Secretary, IRS Acting Chairman

**T**he Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, has approved the reinstatement of the Mandate Secretary for Education, Dr. Danlami Hayyo, and the Acting Executive Chairman of the FCT Internal Revenue Service (FCT-IRS), Mr. Michael Angelo.

The development was disclosed in a statement issued on December 17, 2025, by the Senior Special Assistant to the Minister on Public Communication and Social Media, Mr. Lere Olayinka.

According to the statement, the Minister directed both officials to resume their duties with immediate effect.

Wike, however, cautioned that indiscipline would not be tolerated within the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), stressing the need for all officials to conduct themselves in line with established rules and standards of public service.

The reinstatement, the statement added, is part of ongoing efforts to ensure efficiency, accountability, and effective service delivery across key institutions of the FCTA.

## Senate President Receive U.S. Ambassador, Calls For Deeper Diplomatic Collaboration

**S**enate President, Godswill Akpabio, has received the United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Richard Mills Jr., at the National Assembly Complex, Abuja, where he called for strengthened diplomatic, democratic and developmental collaboration between Nigeria and the United States.

The meeting recently underscored a shared commitment by both countries to deepen bilateral relations, particularly in the areas of democracy, governance and mutual cooperation.

Akpabio noted that Nigeria and the United States share a common democratic heritage, stressing that Nigeria's system of government was modelled after that of the United States, thereby underscoring the need to nurture and preserve democratic values in both nations.

"I thank you for receiving me during the 249th Independence Anniversary of your country. I congratulate you. That means you have practised democracy for

249 years. We cannot say we have done the same in Nigeria," Akpabio said.

He added that the longstanding collaboration between the two countries remained significant, pointing out that the United States' success and global influence were rooted in its strong democratic institutions and shared values.

"One thing I do know is that America has remained prosperous and has assisted many countries of the world because of the strong belief that, 'In God we trust.' In Nigeria, despite our religious and ethnic diversities, we also believe that God is supreme. So, we share something in common," he stated, welcoming the envoy to the 10th Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

In his remarks, Ambassador Mills said the visit was aimed at reviewing the current state of U.S.-Nigeria relations and identifying areas for enhanced co-operation between the two countries.

He reaffirmed the commitment of the United States Mission to continued engagement with Nigeria in the pursuit of shared

democratic ideals and development objectives.

According to him, the meeting also provided an opportunity to gain insight into the legislative agenda and priorities of the Nigerian Senate in the year ahead.

The visit comes amid recent diplomatic exchanges following the decision by the United States Government to place Nigeria on its watch list of "Countries of Particular Concern," over allegations of widespread persecution and killings of Christians.

Nigerian authorities have since rejected the designation, insisting that the country's security

challenges including jihadist insurgency, banditry and communal violence affect citizens across religious lines and should not be mischaracterised as religiously motivated persecution.

The Federal Government also dismissed suggestions of punitive measures or military intervention as unfounded and potentially destabilising, urging international partners to respect Nigeria's sovereignty and collaborate constructively in addressing violent extremism and insecurity.



President, Godswill Akpabio,

## House of Reps Moves To Reform Electoral System, Strengthens INEC

**T**he House of Representatives has advanced efforts to reform Nigeria's electoral system with the clause-by-clause consideration and adoption of key provisions of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill, aimed at strengthening the powers of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), tightening electoral procedures and addressing shortcomings observed in recent elections.

At plenary recently, lawmakers approved wide-ranging amendments designed to enhance transparency, improve the conduct of elections and reduce post-election disputes across the country.

Clauses 3, 5 and 6 of the bill, which relate to preliminary provisions and interpretation, were adopted to align existing definitions with

evolving electoral practices and realities.

The House also approved Clauses 10 and 12, which reinforce INEC's authority over the organisation, supervision and management of elections, including logistics and the deployment of electoral personnel nationwide.

In a bid to curb manipulation and ensure greater inclusion of eligible voters, lawmakers adopted Clauses 18 and 22, dealing with voter registration and the compilation, maintenance and display of the voters' register, with amendments to strengthen safeguards in the process.

Significant amendments were made to Clauses 23 and 29 on the nomination of candidates by political parties and the submission of candidates' lists to INEC. The revisions seek to clarify timelines, enforce compliance and enhance INEC's oversight of

political parties' internal processes.

Clauses 31, 32 and 34, which address party primaries, the publication of candidates' particulars and qualifications for elective offices, were also approved, as part of measures to tackle pre-election irregularities and disputes.

The House further adopted Clauses 47, 50 and 54, relating to voting procedures, voter accreditation and the use of technology in elections, reaffirming the legal backing for INEC's deployment of electronic systems in the electoral process.

Clause 60, as amended, focuses on the declaration of election results, while Clause 62 strengthens provisions on the collation, transmission and custody of results, aimed at reducing controversies arising from election outcomes.

In a tougher stance against electoral malpractice, lawmakers

approved Clauses 64 and 65 on electoral offences and penalties, including provisions targeting vote-buying and other violations of the Act.

Clauses 71 and 73, which deal with election petitions and timelines for the resolution of disputes, were also adopted, while Clause 74 was approved with amendments to further streamline post-election legal processes.

The House, however, deferred consideration of a contentious clause, indicating that further consultations would be held before a final decision is taken, as the bill moves closer to passage.

## Spotlight

# Nigeria's Protein Crisis: Prof. Kalu Calls for Livestock Revolution

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru and  
Favour Okorie

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU), has concluded its 2025 inaugural lecture series with a compelling call for a national rethink on livestock production, animal genetics, and food policy as critical tools for addressing Nigeria's growing protein and nutritional crisis.

The 66th inaugural lecture, and the final one for the year, was delivered by Professor Uma Kalu, a renowned Professor of Animal Genetics and Breeding. Titled; "Seed Boogie and Products of Animal Origin: A Panacea for Quality Protein Crisis," the lecture blended science, policy, and public education, drawing attention to the urgent need to improve livestock productivity to meet the dietary needs of Nigeria's fast-growing population.

The inaugural lecture series, held monthly, was part of an initiative of the Vice Chancellor, Professor Maduebibisi Ofo Iwe, aimed at strengthening research culture, improving teaching quality, and promoting scholarly engagement within the university community.

In his presentation, Prof. Kalu explained that Nigeria is currently facing a widening gap between protein demand and supply, driven by population growth, declining livestock productivity, economic pressures, and insufficient research investment. While animal protein remains a key component of balanced nutrition, essential for growth, immunity, and cognitive development many Nigerians consume far below the recommended levels.

He stressed that the crisis is no longer just about production but also about sustainability, affordability, and access. According to him, without deliberate intervention in livestock genetics, breeding systems, and research infrastructure, the protein deficit will continue to worsen, with serious implications for public health, learning outcomes, and national productivity.

Central to Prof. Kalu's lecture was the concept of "seed boogie," a term he used to describe the biological and genetic processes involved in animal reproduction and improvement. He explained that livestock productivity begins at conception, where the quality of genetic materials; the sperm and ova determines the growth rate, disease resistance, reproductive efficiency, and yield of animals.

Through selective breeding and well-designed crossbreeding programmes, he said, farmers can produce animals that grow faster, lay more eggs, yield more milk, and survive harsh environmental conditions. He emphasized that quantitative genetic principles such as heterosis retention, breed complementarity, and enhanced genetic variability should guide livestock improvement efforts, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria.

A major highlight of the lecture was Prof. Kalu's advocacy for the strategic



Professor Uma Kalu

development of indigenous livestock species, especially local chickens. He described indigenous chickens as one of the most cost-effective and reliable sources of high-quality animal protein, particularly for rural and low-income households.

Unlike exotic breeds, indigenous chickens are better adapted to local climates, require less intensive management, and show greater resistance to diseases. However, their productivity remains low due to poor breeding practices and lack of structured improvement programmes.

Prof. Kalu recommended pilot-scale development of improved local chickens, combining the resilience of indigenous breeds with enhanced productivity traits. Such programmes, he argued, would not only increase protein availability but also improve farmers' incomes, stabilize market prices, and strengthen food security.

The professor identified the lack of specialized research centres as a major constraint to livestock development in Nigeria. He urged the Federal

Government and relevant agencies to establish livestock research centres in regions with comparative advantages for specific animal species. According to him, decentralised and region-specific research would enhance efficiency and accelerate innovation.

He also noted that economic challenges, rising feed costs, weak funding for research, and limited access to modern breeding technologies continue to undermine livestock improvement efforts. Addressing these issues, he said, requires strong collaboration between universities, research institutes, policymakers, and the private sector.

While commending the Federal Government for establishing the Ministry of Livestock Development, Prof. Kalu stressed that the ministry must go beyond policy statements to create centres of excellence across all geopolitical zones, particularly in animal genetics and breeding.

Beyond agriculture, the lecture highlighted the link between protein consumption and education outcomes. Prof. Kalu explained that protein

deficiency affects physical growth, brain development, concentration, and learning capacity, especially among children. In this sense, improving livestock production is not just an agricultural concern but also an educational and developmental imperative.

He urged universities to integrate practical livestock genetics and breeding studies into teaching and research, ensuring that graduates are equipped with problem-solving skills relevant to national needs. Such an approach, he said, would improve teaching and learning while positioning higher institutions as drivers of innovation.

Declaring the inaugural lecture closed, the Vice Chancellor Prof. Maduebibisi Ofo Iwe commended Prof. Kalu for addressing an issue of national importance with clarity and scientific depth. He described the lecture as both enlightening and timely, particularly in the context of Nigeria's food and nutrition challenges.

Reflecting on his administration, Prof. Iwe noted that the past five years at MOUUAU have been marked by stability, peace, and academic focus, creating an environment conducive to learning and research. He reiterated the university's commitment to promoting knowledge that directly addresses societal problems.

Explaining the concept of "seed boogie" further, the Vice Chancellor described it as the mating process that leads to the production of offspring, with sperm and ova acting as the two essential partners. He expressed optimism that a deeper understanding of such biological processes would support improved livestock productivity.

However, Prof. Iwe lamented that Nigeria's protein crisis has shifted from scarcity to affordability. He observed that the rising cost of livestock products, where a single chicken now sells for ₦15,000 or more, has placed animal protein beyond the reach of many families. This situation, he warned, has serious implications for nutrition, learning, and public health.

Also speaking at the event, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, and wife of the lecturer, Dr. Ifeyinwa Uma Kalu, congratulated Prof. Kalu on the milestone and pledged continued support for his research and academic contributions.

The Vice Chancellor, in his concluding remarks, appreciated the presence of dignitaries including Prof. Udo Herbert, Registrar of the Nigerian Institute of Animal Farm and former Deputy Vice Chancellor of the university; Prof. Uche Enoch Ogbonnaya, Honourable Commissioner for Health; and Dr. Ngozi Azulu, Special Adviser to the Governor on Health.

The lecture ended with a strong call for urgent, coordinated action to reverse Nigeria's declining protein consumption. Prof. Kalu emphasized that improving livestock genetics, strengthening research, and supporting farmers are achievable goals if backed by political will and public commitment.



*...without deliberate intervention in livestock genetics, breeding systems, and research infrastructure, the protein deficit will continue to worsen, with serious implications for public health, learning outcomes, and national productivity.*



## Features

# Ending Extreme Poverty In Nigeria

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

**M**ore than 830 million people around the world still live in extreme poverty, unable to meet the most basic needs of food, shelter, healthcare, education, and dignity. Behind this global statistic are millions of Nigerians whose lives are constrained not by laziness or lack of ambition, but by deep structural barriers. Data from the World Bank and other development institutions make one thing clear: poverty is not just about income. It is about access, to opportunity, services, security, and hope. And in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria at its center, the urgency to act has never been greater.

Nigeria's role in the global poverty equation is decisive. As Africa's most populous nation, what happens here will shape poverty trends across the continent. Rapid population growth, heavy dependence on oil, insecurity, climate shocks, high inflation, and uneven service delivery have slowed progress and, in many communities, pushed people deeper into hardship. Without bold and coordinated action, millions more Nigerians risk being left behind.

The data point clearly to what must be done and who must do it. Governments at all levels; federal, state, and local, carry the primary responsibility for turning evidence into action.

Firstly, macroeconomic stability and inclusive growth must be restored and sustained. Inflation erodes purchasing power fastest for the poor, while fiscal instability crowds out spending on social

services. The federal government must prioritize sound economic management, expand the tax base fairly, and ensure that public resources are used efficiently. At the same time, Nigeria must diversify its economy beyond oil. Supporting manufacturing, agro-processing, and the digital economy can create productive jobs, especially for young people who currently face limited prospects. States, too, have a role to play by improving the business environment and investing in local value chains.

Secondly, investing in people is non-negotiable. Education and healthcare are the most powerful long-term tools for breaking intergenerational poverty. Governments must increase and better target spending on quality basic education, with a strong emphasis on early childhood development. Learning poverty; where

children attend school but cannot read or do basic mathematics, must be treated as a national emergency. Girls' education, in particular, deserves focused attention, as it delivers outsized benefits for families and communities. In healthcare, strengthening primary health systems and ensuring affordable access to essential services can prevent illness from becoming a lifelong poverty sentence.

Thirdly, Nigeria must scale up and improve targeted social protection. Well-designed cash transfers, school feeding programs, and basic health insurance schemes help poor households cope with shocks; from job losses to floods and droughts. The key is targeting and transparency. By strengthening social registries, using digital identification, and expanding electronic payment systems, governments can ensure that support

reaches the poorest efficiently and with minimal leakage.

Fourthly, local governments must be empowered and held accountable. Poverty is experienced at the community level, and solutions must reflect local realities. State and local governments are best placed to deliver essential services such as clean water, sanitation, rural roads, and primary education. Yet many lack the resources or capacity to do so effectively. Strengthening fiscal transfers, building administrative capacity, and enforcing accountability mechanisms can dramatically improve service delivery where it matters most.

Finally, Nigeria cannot ignore fragility, conflict, and climate change. Insecurity and displacement have trapped millions in poverty, particularly in the North-East and parts of the Middle Belt. Governments must invest in peacebuilding, inclusive development, and job creation in conflict-affected areas. At the same time, climate change is already undermining livelihoods through floods, droughts, and heat stress. Climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable land use, and resilient infrastructure are no longer optional—they are central to any serious poverty reduction strategy.

Extreme poverty is not inevitable. The data are clear, the solutions are known, and the cost of inaction is enormous. What is required now is sustained political will, coordination across all levels of government, and a commitment to put people, especially the poorest at the centre of policy. If Nigeria turns data into decisive action, it can change its poverty trajectory and help lead Sub-Saharan Africa toward a more inclusive and prosperous future.



*Insecurity and displacement have trapped millions in poverty, particularly in the North-East and parts of the Middle Belt. Governments must invest in peacebuilding, inclusive development, and job creation in conflict-affected areas*



## News

# Fubara Commissions Rivers' First Permanent Secretaries' Quarters

By Nzeuzor Jane and Maduadugwo, Jane  
Port-Harcourt

**R**ivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has commissioned the state's first-ever purpose-built Permanent Secretaries' Quarters in Elingbu Community, Obio-Akpor Local Government Area, marking a major step toward improving staff welfare and strengthening institutional capacity in the civil service.

The commissioning was performed by the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Dr. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, and was witnessed by members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) National Working Committee, led by the party's National Secretary, Senator Ajibola Bashiru.

Governor Fubara said the housing scheme was designed to enhance the living conditions, health, and productivity of senior civil servants, noting that staff welfare remains central to effective governance.

"Insecurity begins when people are uncertain of what the next hour holds. This is even more difficult for family men and women, as it affects confidence and decision-making," the Governor said.

He stressed the strategic importance of the Permanent Secretary cadre, describing them as key drivers of policy coordination and service delivery. According to him, providing official accommodation and related support would enable them to carry out their responsibilities with greater focus and professionalism.

"When these basic needs are met, civil servants can dedicate themselves fully to their duties with a stronger sense of responsibility. This initiative will, in time, be extended to other categories of staff," Fubara added.

The Governor urged beneficiaries to protect the facilities and directed the State Head of Service to appoint a facility manager to ensure proper maintenance and sustainability of the estate. He noted that improved welfare would discourage sharp practices, enhance productivity, and contribute to the overall development of Rivers State and the country.

In her remarks, Dr. Didi Esther Walson-Jack commended the Rivers State Government for what she described as a strategic investment in staff welfare and institutional continuity. She said the project reflects a deliberate commitment to the dignity

and productivity of senior public servants and urged beneficiaries to reciprocate with renewed dedication to service.

"The commissioning of these quarters underscores a conscious effort to support those entrusted with policy coordination and service delivery. The quality of the design and facilities is commendable," she said.

Also speaking, APC National Secretary, Senator Ajibola Bashiru, described Rivers State as the first fully APC-controlled state in the South-South and called on residents

to continue supporting the party's governance agenda, noting that progress at the state level contributes to national development.

The Rivers State Head of Civil Service, Dr. Inyngi Brown, described the project as historic, noting that it was conceived, executed, and completed within record time under Governor Fubara's leadership. She reaffirmed the civil service's commitment to supporting the administration's developmental agenda.

Providing technical details, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Works, Dr. Austin Ezekiel-Hart, said the estate consists of 29 housing units, made up of nine standalone duplexes and 20 terrace buildings. He added that the quarters are equipped with modern facilities including a water treatment plant, synchronized power generators, CCTV and alarm systems, a gymnasium, recreational areas, and landscaped green spaces designed to promote comfort, efficiency, and productivity.

The commissioning marks a significant milestone in Rivers State's efforts to improve public service delivery through enhanced staff welfare and infrastructure development.



Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

## Religion

# Operating In The Realm Of Financial Fortune By The Word!

**Bishop David Oyedepo**

**A**cquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver (Job 22:21-25).

We recognise from scriptures that all the forces of breakthrough, including financial breakthrough, reside in the Word. For instance, from the above scripture, when we receive the law and operate it based on the principles of the Word, our access to financial fortune is guaranteed.

We also understand from scriptures that among our inheritances in Christ is supernatural wealth. This is because Christ died to destroy the hold of poverty on our lives, among others, and unleash supernatural wealth on us. As it is written:

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and

honour, and glory, and blessing (Revelation 5:12; see also 2 Corinthians 8:9).

That means, every child of God is a candidate for wealth and by redemption, has an inheritance of financial fortune in Christ. This establishes that redemption is our gateway to financial fortune. However, God empowers us for wealth through the revelation and application of the covenant. This is because the revelation of the Word is the gateway to a world of unlimited breakthroughs.

For instance, in my crave to know the secret of Kingdom prosperity, I went on a three-day prayer and fasting adventure on March 20-22, 1982. I took my Bible, the books of Kenneth and Gloria Copeland (The Law of Prosperity and God's Will is Prosperity), searching and asking God to show me this secret. On the third day, God spoke to me from Deuteronomy 8:18 which says: But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. He further said, "My son, My prosperity plan is not a promise, so it does not answer to prayers. It is not a promise, and so it has no respect for fasting. My

prosperity plan is a covenant and until your part is played, I am not committed." This encounter changed my life forever!

This makes the subject of financial fortune a covenant, which demands that we know our part and commit to it, before God can fulfil His part. Therefore, it is the revelation of the terms of the covenant that launches and positions men into the realms of inexplicable but undeniable wealth.

But, what is a covenant?

A covenant can be defined as a spiritual platform where we commit

God, through our obedience of faith, to fulfil His plan in our lives. It is also a deal enacted by God, based on well-defined terms and sealed with an oath (Hebrews 6:13-18).

Thus, Christianity is an adventure in the covenant. The Old and New Testament simply means Old and the New Covenant. As such, without a covenant mentality, one stands the risk of being frustrated in the faith. It is important to know that there is no shortcut to a

world of financial fortune; it is embarking on a covenant journey with God that launches us into it. That is, there is what to do before we can commit God's integrity to perform in our lives.

What, then, is the covenant of financial fortune?

Giving is the anchor law of the covenant of financial fortune. It is written: While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease (Genesis 8:22; see also 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

The law of seed time and harvest is the law that launches men into the realm of financial fortune. 'Seedtime' and 'harvest' means giving and receiving, which provides the gateway to financial dominion.

It is important to note that the covenant of financial fortune is a current covenant that always delivers, the prevailing circumstances notwithstanding. In the course of my encounter on March 22, 1982, I asked God, "How reliable is this

covenant?" He spoke to me from Jeremiah 33:20-21, 25-26: Thus saith the Lord; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. Thus saith the Lord; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

God was simply saying, "Until you can stop the day and night from exchanging position, you cannot nullify my covenant. My covenant remains intact as long as the day and the night keep changing position." It simply means that as long as the sun and the moon keep showing up in their season, no circumstance can stop God's covenant from having effect. The truth is, if we play our part, we commit God's integrity to perform His part (Psalms 89:34).

There are two main

biblical channels of giving. They include:

**Tithing:** Tithing is the foundation and master key to a world of financial fortune. The blessings that accrue to us in tithing guarantee our access to unlimited financial fortune. As it is written: Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Malachi 3:10; see also Leviticus 27:30).

Our tithe is not a donation; rather, it is part of our spiritual responsibility. The Bible records that all the tithes of the land belong to God; thus, when we take whatever belongs to Him, we come under a curse. Let's recognise that no matter the sacrifice we offer to God, it is tithing that secures the returns. Missing out of tithing is the principal diagnosis of financial struggles. God said to me, "If you will maintain a holy tithing requirement for the next six months of this year, you will be singing a new song before you arrive at Shiloh!" Therefore, receive grace to be an ever-willing and consistent 'tither' in Jesus' name!

## Family Matters

**By Pastor Faith Oyedepo**

**I**t is my prayer that pleasant surprises begin to spring forth in your life and endeavours. This month, your marriage, career and family will receive new wine from above that will terminate every form of anxiety! Throughout this series for the month, I shall be exploring the topic: God's Ultimate Desire for Your Family. However, in this edition, I will be dwelling on: Keeping Yourself Pure.

God is specially interested in your marriage and family. He has made everything available for you to enjoy, including a successful home (1 Timothy 6:17). It is God's desire that His children have the best on earth and in life. God desires your marriage to be peaceful and fulfilling.

But, God's intent for your marriage can only be actualised when you keep yourself pure. Purity entails a state of not being contaminated with anything that pollutes you spirit, soul and body. To be pure means to be without evil or sin. The Bible says: Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled... (Hebrews 13:4). The word 'undefiled' there simply means kept pure. You must, therefore, ensure that you keep the marriage bed pure to enjoy the honour in marriage.

You may ask, how possible can this be? You must understand that if this was impossible, God won't tell you to do it. Purity is not restricted to an age grade or gender or a specific period of time. It is required that every child of God walk in

## God's Ultimate Desire for Your Family (1)

purity at all times. As the Bible says: The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good (Proverbs 15:3).

As singles, to enjoy honour in your marriage, you must lay a good foundation for it by keeping yourself pure. Parents, begin to train your children against premarital sex. It does not matter whether it is acceptable in the society or not. If you say, well, God will forgive me after doing it, what about the scar? Remember the Bible says: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (Romans 6:1).

The truth is: Sex is the seal of the marriage covenant. Any sexual relationship engaged in outside marriage, breaks the seal and attracts God's punishment. Therefore, you must never get yourself involved in it. However, if you have already defiled the bed, God is always merciful and faithful to forgive if you ask Him sincerely (Psalm 86:5; 1 John 1:9).

Many people get emotionally distorted when they defile the marriage bed to the extent that it disturbs their marital life. You can save your marriage from torments by keeping your life pure. When you defile the marriage bed, you are behaving like a beast and whatever happens to a beast can

happen to you at any time. Therefore, you must make a change in the right direction in the name of Jesus Christ!

Give no room to the devil if your soul is actually precious to you. When you get into defiling the marriage bed, whether you are single or married, it is because your soul is not precious to you.

God made man with certain physiological and emotional needs and marriage provides the best fulfilment for them. Physiologically, man needs sex. It is part of his physical nature, and the satisfaction of that urge is permitted only within the parameters of marriage. God honours the physical union of a man and his wife by ensuring that they find fulfilment in each other. This is why He frowns at adultery and fornication. 1 Corinthians 7:2 says: Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

This is not to say that young men and women should rush into marriage just for the sole aim of satisfying their sexual urge. That would make them nothing but bedmates. The love and excitement in such a relationship never last and that is not God's plan or purpose for marriage. As a single man or lady, you are expected to control your urge until you locate a suitable partner with whom you are ready to spend the rest of

your life with and are legally married to. The truth is: if you cannot tame your sexual drive while single, you probably will not be able to exercise control even when you are married. Flaunting God's purpose in this area of marriage can be very costly to your home and destiny. Therefore, don't do it!

Refuse to fall victim, if you truly value your glorious destiny. Don't say you want to earn yourself a living by whoremongering because God will judge those who do that. Stop it! Don't wait for the fire of God to come upon you, plead for His mercy, call upon Him now that He is ready to hear you. The Bible says: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1). In other words, the presentation of your body unto the Almighty God as a living sacrifice is your reasonable service unto God. Any service done unto God without your body being a living sacrifice is not acceptable. It does not matter what you do and the volume of money you give in church every day. If your body is not kept pure, that service is not acceptable unto God. Whether single or married, illicit sexual affairs render your service to God unrewardable and will deprive you of enjoying the honour He has destined for you in marriage.

God is much more interested in your person than your money or what you can do. When your person is acceptable unto God, then your service will become acceptable. Receive grace to practice the Word of God so that you can truly enjoy the honour destined for you in marriage in Jesus' name!





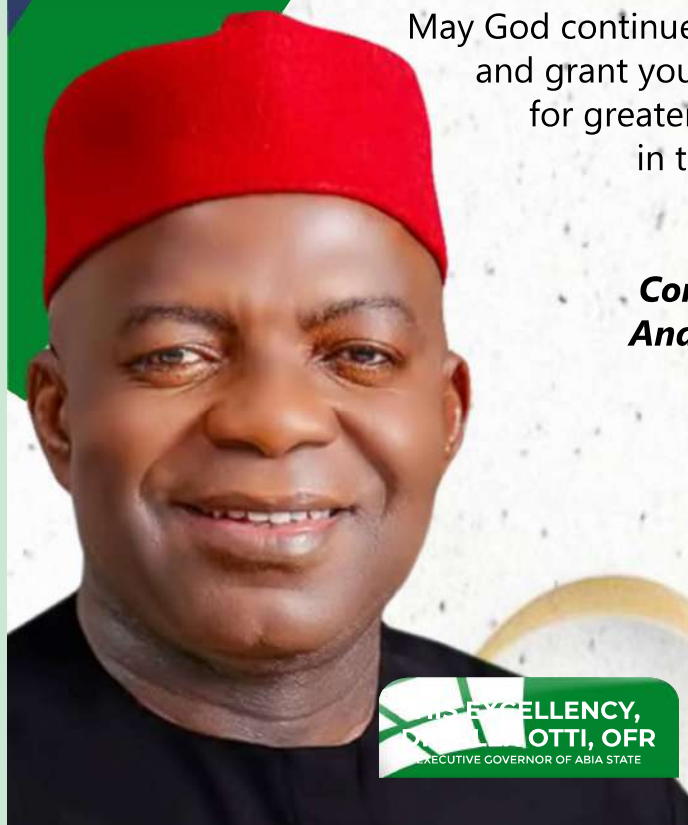
# Congratulations

On behalf of the Ministry of Health and entire Abia State, I wish to congratulate His Excellency **Dr Alex Chioma Otti OFR** the Executive Governor of Abia State for winning the **2025 Leadership Challenge Award (South East)** in Primary Healthcare and his numerous strides which has brought tremendous transportation to the Abia State Health ecosystem.

Continue to soar high like eagle you are. Indeed, all Abians are solidly behind you.

May God continue to strengthen and grant you more wisdom for greater achievements in the days ahead.

**Once Again  
Congratulations!  
And compliments  
of the season.**



## Photos Speak



R-L: DG, World Trade Organization, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Gov. Alex Otti of Abia and his Deputy, Engr Ikechukwu Emetu, during the commissioning of the Abia Electric Shuttle Buses by Abia Gov. at Int'l Conference Centre, Umuahia.



Gov. of Delaware, United States of America, Dr. Bethany Hall-Long ©, Gov Alex Otti of Abia (6th L), Senator Uche Ekwunife (5th L), Abia SSG, Prof Kenneth Kalu (4th L) and others, as Abia Gov. received a delegation led by the Gov. of Delaware, Dr. Bethany Hall-Long, in a meeting at Okpara Auditorium Umuahia,



L-R: Gov Alex Otti of Abia, Member Repr. Isiala Ngwa North and South at House of Reps, Hon. Ginger Onwusibe, Member Repr Obingwa/Osisioma/Ugwanagbo Federal Constituency, Hon. Munachim Alozie, Hon. Osanwa Okwara Ibe, Repr. Arochuku/Ohafia and Hon. Amaobi Ogah of Isuikwuato/ Umunneochi as they worshiped in Streams of Joy Int'l, Abuja.



Traditional Ruler of Ekeoba Community, Eze Iheanyichukwu Nwokenna (center front) and some Elders of Ekeoba Community, as Abia Govt celebrated the 65th birthday of their Son and Abia music legends, Sir Bright Chimezie (Zigima) at Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia,



Abia State Commissioner for Finance, Mr. Uwaoma Ukandu (4th from left), Permanent Secretaries, labour union leaders, and other dignitaries during a Sensitization/ Enlightenment Programme on the implementation of the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) for Abia State civil servants.



A cross-section of Abia State public servants during a Sensitization/Enlightenment Programme on the implementation of the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) in the state.



President and CEO, Coscharis Group, Dr. Cosmos Maduka (standing), Gov. Alex Otti of Abia (1st L), DG, World Trade Organization, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala (c) and Member Repr. Ikvwano/Umuahia at House of Reps, Hon. Obi Aguocha 1st R), as Abia Electric Vehicle convey Gov Alex Otti of Abia and other dignitaries to Ukwa for the switch-on of the reconstructed Ukwa Power Stations.



R-L: Abia Music legend, Sir Bright Chimezie (Zigima) and his Wife, Mrs Chinyere Bright Chimezie, as Abia Govt celebrated the 65th birthday of one of the finest Abia music legends, Sir Bright Chimezie (Zigima) at Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.

Photos by: Chukwu Chidiebere

## Reporter's Diary

# Spreading Hope at Christmas : Foundation Brings Relief To Over 2,000 Widows In Abia

By Okereke Kate

**I**n the true spirit of Christmas and compassion, the High Chief Gift Okonu Foundation, has once again, brought relief and joy to widows, distributing over 2,000 bags of rice, quality wrappers, and cash gifts to widows across Abia State and neighbouring states.

The annual yuletide outreach, which has become a beacon of hope for many vulnerable women, witnessed a beehive of activities as it took place at the Primary School Field, Eluama na Mgbedeala Autonomous Community, Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State.

Widows drawn from Abia, Imo, Enugu, Akwa Ibom, and Rivers States, gathered in large numbers to partake in the humanitarian gesture, turning the venue into a scene of gratitude, songs, and celebration.

Speaking on the motivation behind the initiative, the founder of the foundation, High Chief Gift Okonu an illustrious son of Ogbakiri in Rivers State, recalled the personal experience that shaped his lifelong commitment to caring for widows.

According to him, watching his widowed mother struggle and make immense sacrifices to raise her children left an indelible mark on his heart. He noted that during those difficult times, he made a solemn vow to God that if blessed, he would dedicate part of his life and resources to supporting widows.

True to that vow, the widows' outreach has now been sustained consistently for over nine years, growing in scale and impact each year. Beneficiaries received food items to cushion the effects of economic hardship, clothing materials to enable them celebrate the season with dignity, and cash support to meet personal and

family needs.

Many of the widows expressed heartfelt appreciation to the foundation, describing the intervention as timely and life-changing, especially during the festive period when basic necessities often become unaffordable.

Among those who spoke with our reporter were Deaconess Christiana Gabriel, Edith Irokwe, and Mrs Nneoma Peters, who offered prayers for the founder and the foundation, calling for continued strength and blessings to sustain the initiative. They also expressed joy that they would have food throughout the Christmas season and beyond.

Also speaking, the traditional ruler of Eluama na Mgbedeala Autonomous Community, Eze Chibuike Osuagwu, said the initiative was established to support widows and other less-privileged persons, while also creating awareness across the state that there are individuals willing to selflessly volunteer their time and resources to care for widows.

According to Eze Osuagwu, the outreach, which began in Ogbakiri, Rivers State, was inspired by High Chief Okonu's deep personal connection to the plight of widows.

"He is married to my daughter, Princess Chinturu Okonu, and as an in-law, he resolved that the humanitarian efforts he had been carrying out in his home state would be replicated in the community he married into," the monarch said.

Eze Osuagwu further revealed that High Chief Okonu's humanitarian drive stemmed from witnessing the suffering and resilience of his widowed mother, which played a significant role in shaping his lifelong commitment to supporting widows.

He noted that the



programme initially catered to between 50 and 100 widows but has since grown remarkably to reach over 1,000 widows, reflecting both the growing need and the impact of the initiative.

The monarch also disclosed plans to establish a Widows' Home in Abia State to provide long-term care and support for widows. To achieve this vision, he appealed to Abians, particularly community stakeholders, for support—especially in the provision of land for the project.

Eze Osuagwu commended High Chief Okonu for his numerous contributions to community development,

including electrification projects and other infrastructural interventions. He called on the community to maintain peace and order during the empowerment programme and to fully support the philanthropic activities of the foundation. He described High Chief Okonu as a benefactor who has consistently demonstrated genuine concern for the welfare and development of the people.

Also speaking, the Traditional Prime Minister of Eluama na Mgbedeala Autonomous Community, High Chief

Ukaegbu Amuzie, described High Chief Okonu as a compassionate and selfless in-law whose humanitarian activities have positively impacted the community.

"High Chief Gift Okonu has been helping our community in many ways. He is a caring in-law, and his life has touched many people positively. We believe that those who are blessed should give back to bless others, and we are happy that God is using him to set an example for others to follow. We trust that more people will emulate his good

deeds," he said.

In the same vein, the President-General of the community, Goodluck Festus Nwosuocho, expressed deep appreciation for the foundation's continuous support, noting that the latest outreach surpassed previous editions.

"It is a good thing that we have High Chief Gift Okonu as an in-law. This is not the first time he is embarking on this gesture, but today's empowerment is massive and quite different from what we have experienced in the past. As a community, we appreciate the fact that he remembers us, and we will reciprocate by giving him all the support he needs," he said.

He further assured that the community looks forward to deeper collaboration with the foundation, adding that while the community continues to contribute its best, the interventions of High Chief Okonu have been exceptional.

Also contributing, the Abia State Coordinator of the High Chief Gift Okonu Foundation, Evangelist Constance Okwuchi, attributed the steady growth of the outreach to sustain grassroots evangelism and community engagement.

"God gave me the grace to go from one community to another for evangelism, and through this, the number of widows we reach continues to increase. I pray that God will bless High Chief Gift Okonu with long life. The God who called him into this work will continue to lift him higher," she said.

The event reinforced the foundation's commitment to humanitarian service, social responsibility, and uplifting the most vulnerable members of society, while embodying the core values of love, sharing, and compassion that define the Christmas season.

## News

### Abia Lawmaker, Obianyi Defects From PDP To Labour Party

By Chukwuemeka and Egejuru

**T**he lawmaker representing Ukwu East State Constituency in the Abia State House of Assembly, Hon. Lewis Obianyi, officially defected from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), to the Labour Party (LP).

The defection was formally announced during plenary on the floor of the House on Tuesday, where Hon. Obianyi's letter of defection was read and acknowledged by the Assembly leadership. The development marks a significant shift in the political alignment within the Abia legislature.

In his notification, the lawmaker cited his decision to join the Labour Party as part of a broader realignment in response to evolving political realities within the state. His move further strengthens the Labour Party's presence in the Assembly and underscores the ongoing reshaping of party influence in Abia State.

Hon. Obianyi's defection adds to a growing wave of political realignments as parties position themselves ahead of future electoral contests. Observers noted that such developments could have implications for legislative dynamics, party dominance, and governance priorities in the state.

The Abia State House of Assembly leadership acknowledged the defection in line with parliamentary procedure, officially recording Hon. Obianyi as a member of the Labour Party.

### NDDC Promises Support for Civic Employment Project

By Aligwe Stella

**T**he Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has promised to support Project New Nigeria, a programme that aims to educate and empower young people, promote civic responsibility, and encourage inclusive governance.

The Managing Director of NDDC, Dr. Samuel Ogbuku, said the project fits well with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda and the Commission's development goals. He explained that it is important to help young people take part in democratic activities and understand their role in building the nation.

Dr. Ogbuku, who was represented by the Deputy Director of Education, Health and Social Services, Mrs. Chionna Nwakwue, praised the organizers of the project. She added that the Commission will continue to support any initiative that promotes civic responsibility, develops leadership skills, and empowers the next generation.

"Helping our young people participate more in democracy is an important step in building the Nigeria we want.

We strongly support programmes that promote civic responsibility, nurture leadership, and empower our youths," Dr. Ogbuku said.

The event was attended by key stakeholders, including Senator Mao Oluabunwa and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, Professor Owunari Georgewill. They all stressed the need for young people to be more involved in democratic processes.

The Convener of Project New Nigeria, Mr. Samuel Nzidee, thanked the NDDC for its efforts in developing the Niger Delta Region. He also encouraged more partnership and participation from stakeholders to keep the project moving forward.

## Gov Otti enacts Abia's 25-Year Development Blueprint

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

**G**overnor Alex Otti of Abia State has unveiled and signed into law a comprehensive 25-year Abia State Development Plan, describing it as a binding framework that will guide policy direction, budgeting and resource allocation in the State from 2025 till 2050.

Speaking after unveiling and signing into law the document recently, themed; "Building Resilience, Driving Innovation, Safeguarding Our Future", at the International Conference Centre Ogurube Layout Umuahia, Governor Otti said that the state has been secured against policy reversals by successive administrations to a disciplined pathway of growth, resilience and prosperity up to 2050.

Governor Otti who titled his speech "Mapping the Future", said the document unveiled by his administration goes beyond a mere policy proposal, describing it as a binding legal framework that will guide governance and development in the State for the next 25 years, irrespective of successive administrations.

"What we have just unveiled is more than a proposal. It is a binding law that this administration and the ones to succeed it are obliged to follow over the next two and a half decades.

"The New Abia Project is our collective responsibility. The future of Abia is now mapped, and I shall be the first to ensure that we will not depart from this path that we have set for ourselves", the Governor assured.

Governor Otti further noted that future governments would find it "very, very difficult" to discard the plan, as doing so would require returning to the State House of Assembly and convincing the people to chart a different course.

The Governor emphasised on the need for strategic planning, noting that development does not happen by chance but through deliberate planning backed by discipline and law.

He added that the volatile economic realities of recent years had rendered the previous administrations earlier 30-



Governor Alex Otti of Abia State

year plan, launched in 2020, obsolete.

"In 2023, when we took over in May, a dollar exchanged for less than ₦500. Then something happened, and the dollar almost got to ₦2,000 before settling at around ₦1,400. So if you planned with ₦500, even ₦1,000, that plan has gone belly up", he stated.

Governor Otti said that the new development plan is not a speculative document but a realistic and dynamic framework that reflects changed global and local fundamentals, recent economic reforms and Abia's accelerated development trajectory over the past 30 months.

"We have gathered not to cast Abia in the light of an imaginary El Dorado by 2050, but to present a holistic development framework upon which our policy direction and resource allocation outlook will be evaluated", the Governor further stated.

He explained that the document captures Abia's resource advantages, its current position on the development ladder and clearly defined pathways for governance, infrastructure, human capital development and institutional strengthening.

According to him, beginning from 2026, the State's annual budgets and project implementation plans would be drawn directly from the development framework, making it the benchmark for measuring progress across key sectors such as education, healthcare, infrastructure,

transportation, housing, water and sanitation, and the environment.

He added that the Development Plan provides for a comprehensive review every five years, with flexibility to recalibrate priorities in the event of major socio-economic disruptions.

The governor also outlined a major fiscal shift, revealing that the state aims to achieve self-sufficiency in funding recurrent expenditure through Internally Generated Revenue, while committing all external receipts to capital projects.

He expressed gratitude to development partners including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), PIND, PACE and PwC, as well as the Abia Global Economic Advisory Council, for their contributions to the plan.

In a goodwill message, the United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative Ms Elsie Attafuah, represented by Ms Maureen Okoro, said Abia State's 25-year Development Plan aligns with UNDP's core principles of evidence-based planning, strong institutions, inclusive growth, sustainable finance and human development that leaves no one behind.

She reaffirmed UNDP's readiness to support Abia State in implementing, monitoring and reviewing the plan through data-driven systems, innovative financing, inclusive governance and institutional capacity building.

In his contribution, the representative of Partnership Initiative In Niger Delta, PIND, Mr Chuks Ofolue noted that the 25 years Development Plan which is a review of the 30-years Development Plan of the previous administration is more focused, and emphasised that effective implementation, continuity and capacity-building within the civil service are critical to the plan's success.

Also, the Strategy, Institutions and Policy Advisor at the Partnership for Agile Governance and Climate Engagement (PACE), Mr. Obibuaku Ordu, the President of the Aba Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, Mazi Jude Nwosu, described the 25-year Development Plan as a clear demonstration of Governor Otti's resolve to transform Abia State into a hub of innovation. They assured that they would partner the government to support the successful implementation of the plan.

Earlier in his address, the Commissioner for Budget and Economic Planning, Mr Kingsley Anosike, had said the development plan was built on the solid record of the Otti administration's first 30 months, which he described as a period when "focused leadership compressed years of development into months".

Anosike added that reforms in education, healthcare, unprecedented revolution in infrastructure, and the civil service had renewed public trust and provided a strong foundation for the long-term development planning.

The commissioner said that the 25-year plan, aligns with global frameworks, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, ECOWAS Vision 2050 and Africa's Agenda 2063.

He explained that the plan is structured around six strategic pillars, focusing on fiscal strength, industrialization, human capital development, climate resilience, governance reform and private sector engagement.

Anosike described the document as "a plan of and for the people," noting that it was developed through extensive consultations with traditional rulers, youths, women, civil society groups and development partners.

## Opinion

# Burkina Faso, Benin, And The Fables Of Regional

By Dakuku Peterside

**W**hen West Africans saw videos of mutinous soldiers seizing Benin Republic's state television, reports of Nigerian jets in Beninese airspace, and Burkina Faso's anger over a "suspicious" Nigerian military plane, an old pattern reemerged: Nigeria, the regional sheriff, is back. This comforts Abuja's political class—a story of a wounded giant finding its stride. But, like most power fables, it reveals little and conceals much.

This moment is not just about Nigeria seeking regional leadership. More profoundly, it marks West Africa's rearrangement: old alliances are weakening, new blocs are emerging, and diplomacy is giving way to military posturing. The celebrated intervention masks a reality—West Africa is entering a phase dominated by displays of military force, with political change increasingly dictated by power rather than consensus.

For many Nigerians, the "Burkina Faso issue" began as an aviation story: a Nigerian military aircraft made an emergency landing in Bobo-Dioulasso, eleven soldiers were detained, and Burkina Faso's military government protested the lack of clearance. Technically, it's a procedural dispute. In reality, it is another sign of a simmering standoff between Nigeria and the new Sahel military bloc.

Burkina Faso, along with Mali and Niger, has walked out of ECOWAS and joined the Alliance of Sahel States – a political and security shield for juntas under pressure from sanctions and demands for democratic transition. They present themselves as sovereign patriots reclaiming dignity from foreign meddling and hypocritical regional elites. Abuja, in turn, sees its consolidation – and its embrace of new external patrons – as a direct challenge to the rules-based regional order it spent decades underwriting.

Burkina Faso's strong reaction to the Nigerian aircraft is best understood as a challenge to Nigeria's claim to regional dominance. This incident represents a conflict between two models: one based on electoral democracy and norms, the other on military leaders claiming to reflect public dissatisfaction with corruption and foreign influence.

For years, ECOWAS was held up as Africa's model subregional bloc – bold enough to send troops to Liberia and Sierra Leone, and later The Gambia, to enforce election outcomes and protect civilians. Today, that aura has faded. The exit of the three Sahel juntas has exposed the limits of a community whose cohesion depended on a fragile consensus about minimum political standards: regular elections, term limits observed at least in spirit, and a public commitment to democracy, however hollow it sometimes sounded.

With eroding norms, ECOWAS now lacks the authority it once held. While the bloc still holds emergency meetings and speaks out against coups, its declarations

reveal internal divisions. Some members oppose sanctions on military regimes while accepting undemocratic civilian leaders; others hesitate to act. Fragmentation has replaced unity.

Nigeria still drives many of these processes, but the moral and political capital that once made ECOWAS decisions bite has thinned. To the junta, ECOWAS is a neo-colonial proxy. To many citizens, it is a club of incumbent presidents. In this contested space, every Nigerian move – whether a military deployment or a diplomatic démarche – is read not just as statecraft, but as a claim to a contested regional throne.

Benin's near-coup sharpens these tensions. When mutinous soldiers in Cotonou tried to oust President Talon, they did more than attack the state—they sparked regional danger. A successful coup in Benin would have completed a line of military regimes stretching from Guinea to Nigeria's borders. For a country

embrace the "Big Brother" role—spending, fighting, negotiating, and bearing the burden of regional stability, often at the expense of domestic economic well-being. In past decades, this relied on economic strength and internal coherence. Today, that foundation is fragile. Nigerians are grappling with rising living costs, a volatile currency, unemployment, persistent insecurity, and deteriorating public services. Confidence in institutions is brittle; faith in politics is thinner still. The organised opposition is fragmented and often reactive, leaving the government with more space to frame national debates but less genuine accountability.

In this environment, foreign interventions are politically enticing; they let leaders project strength abroad and draw attention away from internal problems. These regional crises allow political leaders to demonstrate decisiveness, even as they struggle to address basic problems at home, such as electricity, food, and security.

institutions strengthened, whereas militarisation of politics leads to a dead end.

Many citizens in the region distrust both military and civilian leaders. They see juntas failing to deliver security and elected governments unable to stop corruption. Mistrust has created a space for competing national narratives, used as tools for influence and legitimacy among skeptical publics.

Now, power is judged not just by military might but by who can win public trust. Yet, as the narrative struggle intensifies, leaders turn to force deploying troops and security alliances, while efforts to build strong institutions and responsive governance are often neglected.

Nigeria stands at the centre of this swirl, both protagonist and cautionary tale. It cannot retreat into isolation; its geography, demography, trade routes, and cultural reach make that impossible. What happens in Benin, Niger, or Burkina Faso will continue to shape its security and prosperity. Abuja will sometimes have to act – swiftly, even forcefully – beyond its borders. That is the burden of being the largest power in the neighbourhood.

But Nigeria cannot afford to believe its own flattering myths. Regional power is not a substitute for domestic renewal; it is a derivative of it. A state that is unsure of its social contract at home cannot sustainably underwrite stability abroad. If Nigeria's policing, justice, economic governance, and political institutions remain fragile, no number of foreign deployments will secure lasting influence. At best, it will win short-term tactical victories and lose the strategic contest for legitimacy.

Equally, this would require Nigeria's leaders to treat domestic reform as the foundation of any meaningful regional role. Stabilising the currency, reducing poverty, restoring confidence in law enforcement and the courts, tackling grand corruption, and rebuilding trust between state and citizen are not merely "internal" issues; they are the bedrock of sustainable influence. A prosperous, well-governed Nigeria is far more persuasive than a struggling Nigeria that flies jets over its neighbours.

Burkina Faso, Benin, and the wider Sahel are not just distant theatres in a new Great Game. They are mirrors held up to Nigeria's face. In them, the country can choose to see a flattering portrait of an unchallenged hegemon, or a more honest image: a pivotal, powerful but vulnerable state, whose choices – between force and reform, spectacle and substance, narrative and reality – will help determine whether West Africa sinks deeper into a cycle of coups and counter-coups, or slowly edges toward a more stable, genuinely democratic order.

*Dakuku Peterside is the author of two best selling books; Leading in a Storm and Beneath the Surface.*

**ECOWAS and Nigeria, by contrast, insist that the only sustainable foundation for peace is constitutional order that coups, however popular they may briefly appear, deepen instability and invite repression. They argue that flawed elections can be corrected and institutions strengthened, whereas militarisation of politics leads to a dead end.**

already battling insecurity and porous frontiers, that risk was intolerable. Security in Benin is deeply intertwined with Nigeria's economy and informal trade networks. Its ports, border markets, and smuggling corridors are part of Nigeria's daily economic life, whether policymakers like it or not. An unstable or hostile regime in Cotonou would ripple through customs revenues, border communities, and political calculations in Abuja and the South West.

Nigeria's swift military action was not merely a show of solidarity, but a move to safeguard its interests. Stationing troops in Benin highlights that Abuja is now openly using military means to influence regional outcomes. This could be seen as resolute leadership or as increased overseas commitments at a time when Nigeria faces serious domestic problems.

And at home, Nigerian leaders

If foreign policy becomes a domestic show, military actions abroad can distract from Nigeria's pressing economic and security problems. In this case, strategies for regional power may undermine the government's legitimacy at home.

At the core of the emerging contest in West Africa is not only territory or language but narrative. The Sahel juntas are telling their people a powerful story: that they are reclaiming sovereignty from corrupt civilian elites and foreign puppeteers, restoring dignity to nations humiliated by insecurity and economic despair. They wrap their rule in the language of patriotism and anti-imperialism, even as they centralise power and muzzle dissent.

ECOWAS and Nigeria, by contrast, insist that the only sustainable foundation for peace is constitutional order that coups, however popular they may briefly appear, deepen instability and invite repression. They argue that flawed elections can be corrected and



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## Metro

## Feature

### Court Sentences Four To Death For Kidnapping In Akwa Ibom

From Lovina Emole

**A**n Akwa Ibom State High Court has sentenced four men to death by hanging for their roles in a series of kidnappings in Ikot Abasi, Akwa Ibom State, and nearby communities in Rivers State.

The court found them guilty of kidnapping an Anambra State businessman, Mr. Chijioke Anyanwuor, owner of Jon KAMSU Supermarket in Ikot Abasi, after collecting a ₦3 million ransom from his family.

The convicts are Marvelous Ndah (38) from Ikot Iyire, Edemaya, Ikot Abasi Local Government Area; Anthony Akpan (37) from Ekput, Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area; Aniema Eshiet (34) from Oborenjin, Ikot Abasi; and Onyebule Gift Ogbonna (41) from Omuma Local Government Area in Rivers State.

They were tried with two other defendants, Uche Success Nwokocha and Chidi Christian Nwokoma. The court cleared and released the two men because there was no strong evidence linking them to the kidnapping.

The four convicts were charged with conspiracy and kidnapping under Akwa Ibom State laws.

In a judgment that lasted over two hours, Justice Archibong Archibong said the prosecution proved its case beyond reasonable doubt and found the four men guilty. The judges said the judgment should serve as a warning to others who may want to commit similar crimes.

The court heard that on January 25, 2016, the gang kidnapped Mr. Anyanwuor in front of his home in Ikot Abasi. Although the family paid the ₦3 million ransom, the kidnappers killed him. His body was buried in a

shallow grave at Ikot Iyire, Edemaya.

About four months later, his remains were found and taken to his hometown, Agulu in Anambra State, for burial. He was survived by his wife and four children.

The court also heard that on April 16, 2016, the same gang kidnapped Mrs. Jewel Emem Thomas, a lecturer at Akwa Ibom State University, from her home along Ikpetim Road, Ikot Abasi, around 2 a.m.

Her husband begged the kidnappers to take him instead, but they refused. They later demanded a ₦2 million ransom, which he delivered in Port Harcourt.

After collecting the money on April 19, 2016, the kidnappers released Mrs. Thomas in Ikot Abasi and gave her ₦80 for transport home.

Investigations by the Department of State Services (DSS) led to the arrest of Marvelous Ndah on April 26, 2016, in Uyo. He confessed to taking part in the kidnappings and helped security agents arrest the other gang members.

Ndah admitted collecting ₦400,000 from the ransom paid for Mr. Anyanwuor and said he was involved in several other kidnappings in 2016.

Anthony Akpan confessed that he provided information that helped the gang carry out kidnappings and that he collected money from the ransom payments.

Aniema Eshiet said he guarded the kidnapped lecturer for several days and also collected his share of the ransom.

The court also found Onyebule Gift Ogbonna guilty of actively taking part in the gang's activities.

However, the judge cleared Uche Success Nwokocha and Chidi Christian Nwokoma, saying the prosecution failed to prove their involvement in the crime.

### Rivers Power Shift: Why Fubara Now Holds the Ace

**P**olitics in Rivers State has never been driven by sentiment or permanent loyalty. It is a terrain defined by power, control of state resources, and strategic alignment with the centre. Those still waiting for former Governor Nyesom Wike to "pull magical strings" that would force Governor Siminalayi Fubara to kneel are either misunderstanding Rivers political history or deliberately ignoring its well-established patterns.

A review of the state's political evolution shows a consistent reality: every sitting governor in Rivers State eventually becomes more powerful than his predecessor. Influence only lasts for as long as the occupant of Government House allows it. Once power changes hands, loyalties shift swiftly, and authority consolidates around the sitting governor.

From 1999 to 2007, Dr. Peter Odili rose through the PDP power blocs but soon became the dominant political force himself. By his second term, Odili had neutralised all internal threats and was firmly in control of Rivers politics.

His successor, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi (2007–2015), emerged through Odili's structure but eventually broke free. After early tensions, Amaechi built strong federal alliances, challenged the PDP establishment, defected to the APC, and rose to national prominence, effectively ending Odili's influence in the state.

Nyesom Wike (2015–2023) followed a similar path. Installed by Amaechi, Wike initially projected loyalty but quickly dismantled Amaechi's political structure. By his second term, Amaechi had no

meaningful control in Rivers State. Wike became the most powerful political figure the state had seen, deftly navigating PDP and APC interests while consolidating authority at home.

Today, history is repeating itself. Governor Siminalayi Fubara, installed by Wike in 2023, began his tenure with visible loyalty. However, once impeachment threats emerged, political survival instincts kicked in. Fubara quietly aligned with the Presidency, and federal power intervened decisively to protect him. That moment marked a turning point.

tenure. Despite his public battles with the Buhari administration, he maintained strategic cooperation behind the scenes, approving federal requests and aligning when it served his interests. His eventual reward—the FCT ministerial appointment under President Bola Tinubu—was a direct consequence of that pragmatism.

However, the political tide has shifted. Governor Fubara is now the sitting authority in Rivers State. He has aligned fully with the Presidency and in doing so, secured stronger backing than any former governor can command.

stakeholders; latecomers adjust accordingly. By this logic, even if Wike eventually joins the APC, he would do so under a structure already controlled by Fubara.

President Tinubu, for his part, has little incentive to undermine an APC-aligned governor who has submitted to his leadership and stabilised a strategic state. The centre will always protect its own interests.

This reality should serve as a note of caution to Rt. Hon. Martin Amaewhule and members of the Rivers State House of Assembly. The governor's renewed confidence reflects



Governor Siminalayi Fubara

Control of Rivers political structures shifted rapidly, and Wike's grip weakened almost overnight.

This is not accidental. Rivers State, alongside Lagos, remains one of Nigeria's most economically and politically strategic states. Any sitting governor automatically becomes a major stakeholder in national power calculations. Presidents and ruling parties cannot afford instability in Rivers, which explains why federal interest in the state is always intense.

Wike understood this reality during his

In political terms, he is now APC 001 in Rivers State, a position that carries both symbolic and practical dominance.

Wike, by contrast, remains politically constrained. Fully joining the APC would place him in a crowded field of power brokers where his influence would be limited. As such, he operates in a grey space between parties, unable to exert the kind of absolute control he once enjoyed in Rivers.

In Rivers politics, timing and positioning matter. Those who officially align first become senior

stronger presidential backing. His political moves, including his decamping without seeking the blessing of the FCT minister, were acts of calculated survival, not rebellion.

The message is clear: accept the present political order and work for the peace and development of Rivers State. Continual confrontation against a governor who enjoys popular support and federal backing will only deepen instability.

*Deacon Chukwuemeka Egejuru anipr, writes from Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria.*



## Creative Writers Hangout

### Uche and the Sword (11)

**S**o what do you want to do?" Sandra asked. Uche paused for a while. When he raised his face tears were rolling down his cheeks, "I don't know why this is happening to me. It was reading initially, but now I have learnt how to read and I'm poised to pass, the Principal's stamp issue came up"

"I'll tell the Principal..."

"No Sandra please don't try it"

"I've made up my mind I must tell him" Sandra insisted.

Uche felt defeated. Though he had no idea of what to do, telling the Principal seemed to him the most senseless thing to do.

When they were going home, Sandra saw the male's Senior Prefect, Kelechi burning exam scripts she asked Uche to wait for her while she ran to her male counterpart.

"Why are you burning the scripts?" Sandra asked.

"The Vice Principal has entered the scores in the computer, so he asked me to burn them as there was no space to pack them. Infact they are useless".

"Will you let me take one roll; I want to sell it to a bean ball seller beside our house"

"You're free"

Sandra picked a roll of papers held together by a rubber band. J.S.S.1A was clearly written on the roll. She thanked Kelechi and put it into her bag.

When Asonye came back, in the evening Uche happily gave him the form and told him about the competition.

"Really! That's good. I'll sign it". Asonye said. Uche spuriouly looked at Kate, she glared at him in such a way that Uche felt like the ground should open and swallow him.

"Will you get into the Kitchen?", She snarled. Uche turned and left immediately. "Darling you must not sign that form"

"Why?" Asonye asked.

"This boy is very mischievous. Don't you know that your signing it means you're saying that you should be held responsible for whatever thing he does?"

"And so, what? Is he not my nephew? Uche has changed tremendously. This is an opportunity many parents will want to pay any amount of money to get. Now that my nephew got it in a platter of gold, I'll give him all the support he needs."

"Look at you. I'm ashamed of you"

"Kate enough of that insult or..."

"Or what, Asonye?" Kate asked as she stood Akimbo in front of him "As long as I am your wife what I said must be done in this house."

"If you want to be in charge you would have remained in your father's house, marry a man that will change his surname to yours. But as long as you left your father's house and bear my name you must be submissive to me."

"You're an idiot." Kate fired back. "Are you a man, not to talk of a husband?" Those words stung Asonye like a bee that he gave her a thunder of a slap. Kate shouted, bent down and held her cheeks. She saw her stiletto shoe under the table; she quickly took it and hit Asonye on the head. Asonye let out a painful cry and went ballistic punching her till after she had fallen down.

Their children started crying, calling on their parents to stop. Uche came out from the kitchen and peeped. He laughed and ran back to the Kitchen. He mimicked how his uncle stood astride Kate punching her mercilessly. Uche laughed and danced around.

After the fight, Kate refused to eat. She went to bed and wept till midnight. Kate's weeping was music to Uche's ears, he wished Asonye would be beating her up every day.

Asonye gave Uche the form, which he had signed before leaving for work the following morning. Uche happily put it into his bag. While he was in the Kitchen, Kate searched his bag and collected the form.

When Uche came into the parlor and saw her distorted face, he nearly laughed.

"God punish you. Good morning your head. Why did you look at me like that?" Kate quarelled as she stood up and came after Uche who headed for the Kitchen. Kate collected the big spoon for soup and used it to beat Uche mercilessly. Uche had no escape route as Kate deliberately cornered him so that Uche could not escape. When she was about to suffocate she left him.

Uche whimpered from the corner where he was squatting as all his body pains him. Kate brought out a crumbled paper from her

#### CITATIONS INSPIRANTES

"Show me a family of readers, and I will show you the people who move the world"

- Napoleon Bonaparte

You're a fool". She showed Uche his form and threw it into the fire. Uche cried and cried but his crying was just like that of a chick when a hawk takes it away. Uche's crying did not attract any help.

Mr. Godwin was mad at Uche when Uche went to school and told him what had happened to the form. "Uche, it is over. There's nothing I can do." He opened a file and brought out a filled form. "This is Uzo's own he has returned it. So I don't know what to do for you again. By the way have you found the stamp?"

"Sir, true, I don't know anything about the stamp" Uche pleaded.

"That's not what I asked you. Have you found the stamp?"

"No Sir"

"Well there's even no need for you to fill the form. The Principal called me this morning and told me that you'll be arrested on Friday. Since you refused to return the stamp, you can go."

Uche left the office with tears and cried the whole day even while writing his last paper.

On vacation day, the Willington Junior High School was filled to capacity. Every student was present at least to witness the joy of those who will come first and the tears of those that will be flogged for coming last.

Uche was on the lips of many students, as he would not only be flogged if he fails but he would be the first student to be expelled for failing three successive terms.

Uche came to school not knowing what to expect. He had not set his eyes on Sandra since Monday when she wrote her last paper. Uche was looking forward to seeing her as every JS 3 student was asked to come to school that day.

No matter what would come, Uche braced up for the jeering, the flogging, the harassment or even the shame of being whisked away by the police.

He was late to school as usual. At the gate some prefects were flogging late comers, perhaps the last time they would do so as new prefects will be appointed from the newly promoted JS3 students when school resumes.

Kalu, the Labour Prefect, was among the prefects at the gate. Immediately Kalu saw Uche, he waved him to come. Uche went to him courageously. He flogged Uche six instead of the three strokes they were flogging others. Uche endured it and reminded himself that the longest school day had just began.

As he left, he overheard one prefect saying that police will arrest him. Uche's heart melted, he felt tears coming to his eyes. "No! I promised myself to be courageous today." He reassured himself and wiped his eyes with the back of his hand.

After everywhere had been swept clean and all bushes cleared, the bell rang. Every student assembled in line according to his or her class. It was then that Uche saw Sandra

for the first time that day. She smiled and waved at him.

Uche became very nervous. Was Sandra waving him goodbye, because the police would arrest him? Uche dismissed that idea. He was convinced that Sandra would not be happy to see the police whisk him away.

Uche remembered his mother and imagined what she would be doing at that time. She might be in the farm under the sun weeding or doing some other thing. What would she be thinking about him? Uche felt a bit relieved that his mother does not know what he was going through and therefore would not be overly worried about him.

After the usual formalities, the Principal came out from his office. The students made a shout of excitement. The Principal stopped midway and made a phone call, mounted the podium and started his usual end of the term announcements. He announced when school would reopen, the school fee for next term and other things that students would have to tell their parents.

Uche was overwhelmed with thoughts that he was not paying attention to what the Principal was saying. But, he nearly took to his heels when a police patrol van drove into the school with eight heavily armed policemen. Uche looked around considering through which way he could escape. But, it was completely impossible as teachers were standing round the students.

Uche looked at Sandra, she was less concerned wearing her characteristic disarming smile as she whispered into somebody's ear.

The police van stopped behind the assembly under a Melina tree. Six of the men jumped down immediately. The other sitting with the driver in front came out and others saluted him. He went to the Principal they shook hands and exchanged few words. He came back and whispered something to his men, they spread out.

Uche was fidgeting, he hate to see people carrying guns. But he felt even worse, as they came for him. Uche also wondered why they should be that many. And wearing helmet, bullet proof vests and carrying machine guns, as far as he was concerned a single policeman can arrest him.

Almost ten minutes later, a black maria and another police pickup van drove into the school with more policemen. Uche counted forty policemen, but he knew he was wrong. They must be more than forty.

Uche remembered his C.R.K. lesson on how Jesus was arrested. He remembered that the Jews came with various weapons and Jesus asked them whether he was a criminal that they should be heavily armed. Uche felt like asking the Principal the same question.

"I know that we are waiting to hear the names of those that did very well and those that failed"

"Yes sir", the students shouted,

"It will not be done this term and I hereby cancel my prize for the best JS3 student. The reason is simply why these policemen are here"

Uche looked at the school gate it was shut and two armed policemen were standing there.

"Nevertheless, I'll call out two students," the Principal continued, "Uche Obi"

"Sir!" Uche answered faintly. As he made his way to the podium. Many students were whispering, "this boy again" Others were sighing, few were sympathizing.

Will this be the end of Uche's education? Find out in our next publication.

### AUTHOR of the WEEK Naguib Mahfouz



**N**aguib Mahfouz was one of the most influential literary figures of the Arab world and a pioneer of the modern Arabic novel. He was born on 11 December 1911 in Cairo, Egypt, into a modest middle-class family. Growing up in the historic districts of Cairo deeply influenced his worldview and later became a defining feature of his writing. His early exposure to Egypt's rich cultural heritage and social realities shaped his novels vividly depict the lives of a middle-class Cairo family across generations, against the backdrop of political and social change. Mahfouz's works are noted for their psychological depth, rich characterisation and subtle exploration of issues such as tradition, modernity, religion and power.

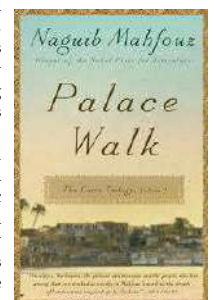
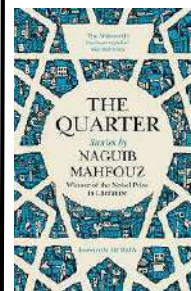
Throughout his career, Mahfouz produced more than 30 novels, hundreds of short stories and numerous screenplays. His writing style evolved to include symbolism and allegory, especially in later works such as *Children of the Alley*, which generated controversy for its philosophical and religious themes. Despite criticism and threats to his life, Mahfouz remained committed to artistic freedom and intellectual inquiry.

In 1988, Naguib Mahfouz became the first Arab writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, an achievement that brought global attention to Arabic literature. He continued writing into old age, even after surviving an assassination attempt in 1994. Mahfouz died on 30 August 2006 in Cairo, leaving behind a lasting literary legacy that continues to influence writers and readers around the world.

lifelong fascination with the lives of ordinary people.

Mahfouz studied philosophy at King Fuad I University (now Cairo University), graduating in 1934. Although he initially considered an academic career, his passion for writing soon took precedence. He began his literary journey by writing historical novels set in ancient Egypt, reflecting his intellectual background and interest in national identity. Over time, however, his focus shifted to contemporary social themes, marking a turning point in his literary career.

He gained widespread recognition for his realistic portrayal of Egyptian society, particularly through his famous Cairo Trilogy—*Palace Walk*, *Palace of Desire*, and *Sugar Street*. These



## Entertainment

 With  
**Akinrujomu**  
**Gideon Oluwatobi**


### The Bright Beacon Mustapha Ajimo Aduke Lights Up Another Year On January 5, 2026

As the calendar turns to January 5, 2026, nearest and dearest will gather to honor Mustapha Ajimo Aduke a paragon of compassion whose presence lights up every room. Known for his bright grin, generous spirit, and a laugh that echoes, Mustapha has become a cherished figure whose impact extends far beyond his immediate circle, an extraordinary individual whose life reminds us of the power of simple acts of kindness.



Her birthday isn't just another day on the schedule; it is a reminder to cherish every laugh, nurture every relationship, and hold onto the unforgettable moments that shape our shared humanity.

### Peller Returns Home Unscathed Police Launch Investigation Into Kidnap Claim



TikTok star Habeeb Hamzat, known as Peller, was reported missing after a livestream on Wednesday night, December 16, 2025. The Lagos State Police Command confirmed that Peller is "at home safe and sound" and that none of his belongings, including his car,

phones or other property, were missing. Police spokesperson Benjamin Hundeyin said officers are investigating whether the incident was a genuine kidnapping, a staged abduction, or a misunderstanding. In the viral video, Peller appears to be taken away by men he initially mistook for security operatives before the camera cuts out, Hundeyin noted there was "no violence whatsoever" and that all of Peller's possessions were intact, the 20-year-old rose to fame in 2021 with comedic skits and has since built a large following on TikTok and Twitch, fans flooded social media with concern, and hashtags bearing his name trended overnight, the police have urged the public to remain calm while they continue their inquiries.

No official statement has been released by Peller himself; he has remained silent on his platforms, likely on the advice of security officials, the incident has sparked a broader conversation about safety for young influencers who livestream their movements.

### Nigeria Rising Star Michael Lambert Oludare Soars High With His Latest Single

Rising Star Michael Lambert Oludare Takes Off with "ELEVATE."

Nigerian up-and-coming artist Michael Lambert Oludare, stage name *Ludar*, is turning heads with his latest single "Elevate," a catchy Afro-beat-R&B fusion that's already climbing streaming charts. Fans are encouraged to download, share and like the track as it rolls out across radio, social media and digital platforms.



## Ronaldo Joins The "Fast & Furious" Crew-vin Diesel Announces The Football Superstar's Shock Cameo On Instagram

**C**ristiano Ronaldo is officially on the *Fast & Furious* roster! Vin Diesel dropped the bombshell on Instagram, posting a snap of himself and CR7 with the caption "We wrote a role for him" - meaning a part was actually crafted for the football legend in *Fast & Furious 11* (the franchise's next installment, slated for an April 2027 release), the film is rounding out its massive ensemble with returning faces like Jordana Brewster, Jason Statham, Tyrese Gibson, Ludacris, Sung Kang, Nathalie Emmanuel and Michelle Rodriguez, and there's even talk of Dwayne Johnson popping up again, fans are going wild, the post already has millions of likes and commenters are already picturing Ronaldo as a high-octane driver or a slick ally for Dom Toretto.

Whether it's a quick cameo or a bigger role, the crossover blends the worlds of football fame and blockbuster action in a way only the *Fast & Furious*

universe can pull off, so, keep your engines revved - the "speed, power, and global stardom" combo is about to hit the big screen!

Vin Diesel dropped a photo with Ronaldo on Instagram, captioning "We wrote a role for him, the part was crafted especially for the football star, though the character's details are still under wraps. *Fast & Furious 11* is billed as the franchise's final film, targeting an April 2027 release, the movie will reunite the core crew - Dom, Letty, Roman, Tej, Han and the rest - plus Dwayne Johnson and Jason Momoa.

It will also bring back Paul Walker's Brian O'Conner via CGI and the help of his brothers, production was delayed by Hollywood strikes and scheduling conflicts, now slated to start mid-2025, director Louis Leterrier returns, and the story returns to Los Angeles street-racing roots, the film



will serve as a tribute to Walker, fulfilling Diesel's three conditions for the finale, fans are buzzing, picturing Ronaldo either as a high-octane driver or a slick ally for Dom, no official confirmation yet from Ronaldo or Universal, but Diesel's hint has

sparked massive hype, the franchise plans to honor its 25-year legacy with this emotional end-chapter, if the cameo lands, it would be the biggest crossover of sports and cinema in recent memory, stay tuned for more updates as filming gets underway later this year.

## Discourse

### Nigeria's New Tax Laws: What to Expect from January 1, 2026

By Okenwa Adaku Jane

**N**igeria is preparing for one of the most significant overhauls of its tax system in decades following the signing of four major Tax Reform Acts in June 2025. The new laws, which are scheduled to take full effect from January 1, 2026, are intended to simplify taxation, widen the tax base, and strengthen government revenue. However, alongside these objectives, the reforms have generated intense public debate and concern over transparency, enforcement powers, and citizens' rights.

The Federal Government has described 2025 as a transition and preparation year, during which individuals, businesses, and tax authorities are expected to adjust to the new framework before full implementation begins in 2026.

The New Tax Laws at a Glance

President Bola Tinubu signed four separate but interrelated tax laws designed to restructure Nigeria's tax administration and policy framework:

1. **Nigeria Tax Act (NTA):** This is the core tax law that clearly defines who should pay tax, what income or profit is taxable, and the applicable rates.

2. **Nigeria Tax Administration Act (NTAA):** This law sets out how taxes are assessed, collected, enforced, and disputed.

3. **Nigeria Revenue Service Act (NRSA):** It replaces the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) with the Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS), granting it expanded responsibilities.

4. **Joint Revenue Board Act (JRBA):** This law strengthens coordination among federal, state, and local government tax authorities to reduce overlap and confusion.

Together, these laws are meant to modernize Nigeria's tax system and bring it closer to global best practices.

Why the Reforms Matter

According to the Federal Government, the reforms are necessary to address longstanding weaknesses in Nigeria's tax system. These include multiple overlapping taxes, low compliance, weak coordination among tax agencies, and over-reliance on

a small number of taxpayers.

The government says the new laws aim to:

Simplify Nigeria's complex tax structure

Reduce multiple taxation and arbitrary levies

Bring more individuals and businesses into the tax net

Generate sustainable revenue for infrastructure, education, healthcare, and security

Key Changes Explained in Simple Terms

Personal Income Tax

One of the most notable changes affects individual taxpayers. Under the new system:

Anyone earning ₦800,000 or less per year will pay no personal income tax.

Higher-income earners will be taxed progressively, with rates increasing as income rises, up to about 25% for top earners.

Certain benefits, including compensation for loss of employment (up to ₦50 million), are exempt from tax.

What this means: Low-income earners are protected, while those who earn more are expected to contribute a fairer share.

Business and Corporate Tax

The reforms provide major relief for small businesses while tightening rules for large companies:

Small businesses with annual turnover below ₦100 million and assets under ₦250 million are exempt from company income tax.

Several existing levies are merged into a single 4% Development Levy, reducing the burden of multiple charges.

Large companies and multinationals must pay a minimum effective tax of 15%, even if they report low profits.

## Sporting Ambassador



# Gladiators Lay Down Their Swords

**R**ecently, two Super Eagles stalwarts, Ahmed Musa and William Troost-Ekong, announced their respective retirements from international football. In this special report, Regina Nneoma Onoh reflects on the illustrious careers of these Nigerian football greats.

Ahmed Musa was born on 14 October 1992 in Jos, Plateau State, North-Central Nigeria, while William Troost-Ekong was born a year later, on 1st September 1993, in Haarlem, Netherlands. Ekong was born to a Dutch mother, Eleanore Troost, and a Nigerian father from Etinan Local Government Area of Akwalbom State.

Musa began kicking a football around his hometown of Kano almost as soon as he could walk. He joined the Kano Pillars Youth Academy at the age of 12 and broke into the senior team at just 16, making his professional debut in 2008. Troost-Ekong, on the other hand, started his football journey in the Netherlands, joining the youth academy of FC Groningen at the age of seven. He rose through the

ranks and made his senior debut in 2013.

On 5 September 2010, at the age of 17, Musa made his Super Eagles debut in a 2012 AFCON qualifier against Madagascar, coming on as a substitute for John Obi Mikel in a 2-0 victory. He scored his first international goal six months later in a friendly against Kenya, opening the scoring in a 3-0 win at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja.

Due to his dual nationality, Troost-Ekong had to choose between representing Nigeria or the Netherlands. After playing for the Dutch U-19 and U-20 teams, he switched allegiance to Nigeria and made his Super Eagles debut on 13 June 2015 in an AFCON qualifier against Chad, playing the full 90



Former Super Eagles Head Coach Jose Paeiro(C) conversing with Ekong(L) and Musa(R)

minutes. He scored his first international goal on 28 May 2018 in a 1-1 friendly draw against DR Congo at the Dokiye Amiesimaka Stadium, Port Harcourt.

In an international career spanning over 15 years, Ahmed Musa etched his name into Nigerian football history. He became Nigeria's most-capped player, earning 111 appearances, surpassing former captain Vincent Enyeama's 101 caps. Musa is also Nigeria's only player to score in two FIFA World Cups and remains the country's highest goalscorer at the World Cup.

At the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, Musa scored twice against Argentina on 14 June 2014 at the Estádio Beira-Rio, as Nigeria fought back twice before narrowly losing 3-2. Four years later, at the

2018 World Cup in Russia, he again scored twice in a famous 2-0 victory over Iceland at the Volgograd Arena. In total, Musa scored 16 goals for the Super Eagles.

William Troost-Ekong served Nigeria for a decade, making 83 appearances and scoring eight goals, an impressive return for a defender.

Musa won the 2013 AFCON

government with the Member of the Order of the Niger (MON) and Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) awards.

Troost-Ekong won bronze at the 2016 Olympic Games, bronze at the 2019 AFCON, and silver at the 2023 AFCON, where he was named Player of the Tournament as the Super Eagles emerged National Team of the Tournament. He was also awarded the Member of the Order of the Niger (MON).

On 17 December 2025, Ahmed Musa announced his retirement from international football via his X (formerly Twitter) handle, stating that he was "stepping away with peace and gratitude" after becoming Nigeria's most-capped player. Similarly, William Troost-Ekong announced his decision on X, thanking coaches, teammates and fans, explaining that the decision was made "with peace" and to create room for the next generation.

Nigeria salutes these legends for their immense contributions and wishes them success in their future endeavours.



Ahmed Musa(R) passing the captain armband to Troost-Ekong(L)



Friends of the pitch.

title in South Africa, claimed bronze in 2019, and silver in 2023. He was honoured by the Nigerian

## At A Glance

<b>Full Name</b>	Ahmed Musa	William Paul Troost-Ekong
<b>Date of Birth</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> October, 1992	1st September, 1993
<b>Place of Birth</b>	Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria	Haarlem, Netherlands
<b>Height</b>	1.71 metres	1.91 metres
<b>Position</b>	Winger	Centre-back
<b>Jersey Number</b>	7	5
<b>International Debut</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> September, 2010 against Madagascar	13 <sup>th</sup> June, 2015 against Chad
<b>First International Goal</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> March, 2011 against Kenya	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2018 against DR Congo
<b>International Caps</b>	111	83
<b>International Goals</b>	16	8
<b>Honours</b>	AFCON Champion 2013, silver 2023, bronze 2019. WAFU Nations Cup 2010. CAF Team of the Year 2014. Member of the Order of the Niger(MON) Officer of the Order of the Niger(OON)	Olympic Bronze 2016 AFCON silver 2023, bronze 2019. AFCON Player of the Tournament 2023. Member of the Order of the Niger (MON)

# NATIONAL Ambassador

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## 2025 Umuagu Unity Cup Kicks Off

By Okechukwu Ubani

The Umuagu Unity Cup 2025, sponsored by Chief Dr. Ikechukwu Samuel Emelandu, Akuruo Uno I of Umuagu Autonomous Community, Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State, officially kicked off on Sunday, 21 December 2025, amid excitement, fanfare, and strong community participation that reflected the significance of the event.

The tournament is being held in loving remembrance of his late father, Chief Godwin N. Emelandu, a foremost educationist and highly respected community leader who believed strongly in unity, youth development, and the use of sports as a powerful tool for social cohesion and character building.

Designed to promote peace, unity, and talent development

Eze of Umuagu, His Royal Highness Eze Engr. John Amaghereonu (Ezeomah Agu II), who witnessed the colourful opening ceremony and first match of the tournament.

The annual football competition, which will run until 31 December 2025, drew a large crowd of football lovers from within and outside the community. The opening ceremony was lively and colourful, marked by cultural displays, high spirits from supporters, and visible enthusiasm from players, coaches, and match officials.

Community elders, youths, coaches, players, and fans were all present, underscoring the unifying essence of the Unity Cup.

Speaking at the event, His Royal Highness Eze Engr. John Amaghereonu

described the tournament as a worthy tribute to the late Chief Godwin N. Emelandu, whom he said was widely known for his passion for education, youth empowerment, and community development through sports. He recalled that both the sponsor and his late father attended Umuagu Central School, Ohuhu, where their love for football was nurtured and actively expressed on the field.

Also speaking, High Chief Oliver Anukwa, a respected leader in Umuagu, explained that the tournament was deliberately organised by Chief Dr. Ikechukwu Samuel Emelandu to preserve and sustain his father's legacy.

According to him, the sponsor has consistently used football as a means of bringing people together,



One of the participating teams

nurturing local talents, and inspiring the younger generation to embrace discipline, teamwork, and excellence.

Delivering the opening speech on behalf of the sponsor, High Chief Anukwa warmly welcomed elders, players, coaches, match officials, and guests to the Emelandu Unity Cup 2025. He described the late Chief Godwin N. Emelandu as a man who saw football not merely as a game, but as a platform for teaching values such as fair play, perseverance, respect, and unity. He noted that true success, according to the late Chief, lies not only in winning matches but in the lessons learned and friendships formed along the way.

The football action lived up to expectations as Team Umuakaon edged Team Nbaguro 1-0 in the opening match, setting an exciting tone for the rest of the tournament. Several matches are scheduled in the coming days, with organisers hopeful that the competition will help discover and nurture young football talents within the community.

Beyond the football pitch, the

Unity Cup also reflected a deeper spirit of compassion and giving back. In a related gesture, Chief Dr. Ikechukwu Samuel Emelandu distributed Christmas rice and other essential food items to Aguebi women in Umuagu village. The women expressed heartfelt gratitude, describing the gesture as timely and uplifting, especially during the festive season.

This humanitarian act further demonstrated the sponsor's commitment not only to sports and youth development but also to supporting the less privileged and strengthening communal bonds.

More than just a football tournament, the Umuagu Unity Cup 2025 stands as a celebration of remembrance, service, and community spirit. As the competition progresses, it is expected to foster unity, inspire hope among young people, and keep alive the enduring legacy of Chief Godwin N. Emelandu; a legacy rooted in leadership, kindness, and the unifying power of sports.



One of the participating teams

### SUDOKU

Puzzle By: Prince Blessing Lazarus

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