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# NATIONAL Ambassador

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## Ukwa La Ngwa Leaders Call For Unity, Endorse Otti's Second Term In Office

By Okechukwu Ubani

Leaders of the Ukwa la Ngwa - Abia Union, recently held a meeting in Abia, to discuss the unity, welfare, and development of their people and endorsed Gov. Otti for his second term in office.

The meeting was chaired by the Speaker of the Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Emmanuel Ihuoma Emeruwa, under the leadership of Chief Theo Nkire. It brought together a wide range of participants, including lawmakers, traditional rulers, youth and women leaders, professionals, religious leaders, business people, and members of the diaspora community.

A key focus of the meeting was the review of reports from the steering committee on the January 30, 2026 civic reception held in honour of Governor Alex Otti. The report was presented by Prince Bobby Eberochi Dick. The gathering also received a message of appreciation from the Governor through his Chief of Staff, Pastor Caleb Ajagba.

The meeting, themed "Shared Prosperity: Our Role in the Continuous Development of Abia State," emphasized the role of the Ukwa la Ngwa people in the growth and stability of Abia State. Participants pledged continued support for the current administration and called for greater unity, peace, and inclusion within the community.

They acknowledged the challenges of governance, especially limited resources, but commended the government for ongoing projects such as road construction, hospital upgrades, school development, and transport infrastructure, including modern bus terminals in Abia and Umuahia.

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Speaker, Abia Assembly, Rt Hon Emmanuel Emeruwa



L-R: Global Director of BudgetIT Foundation, Oluseun Onigbinde, and Governor Alex Otti during a meeting in which the Governor received a delegation from BudgetIT Foundation, a leading civic organisation dedicated to promoting public finance transparency, accountability, and active citizen participation in governance.

## Otti Celebrates Obi Of Onitsha At 85, Hails Integrity, Leadership

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has said that his administration's decision to honour the Obi of Onitsha, His Royal Majesty Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe, at 85 was in recognition of his lifetime of exemplary leadership, integrity, and service to humanity.

Governor Otti spoke recently during a special birthday celebration organised

by the Abia State Government for the revered monarch at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.

He described the Obi of Onitsha as a distinguished statesman, mentor, and symbol of honour, noting that the event was intended not only to celebrate the monarch's achievements but also to inspire younger generations to embrace hard work, diligence, and discipline.

"We want our young people to understand that hard work pays and honour pays," Otti said.

The Governor stressed the need for unity among Nigerians and warned against divisive politics rooted in ethnicity and religion.

According to him, politicians who seek to divide citizens along sectional lines do not serve the nation's collective interest.

"We are one people. Those who try to divide us by tribe or place of origin are misguided," he added.

Governor Otti commended Igwe Achebe for his immense contributions to Igboland, Nigeria, and the international community, noting that his wisdom and statesmanship continue to inspire leaders across generations.

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## Otti Is Grooming Youths For Future Leadership

By Kelechi Eme-Ogidi

The Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of the Abia State Diaspora Commission, Rev. Annie Onu-Onwuchekwa, has said that Governor Alex Otti is preparing young people in the state for future leadership through his policies and programmes.

She made the statement while receiving members of the organising committee of the "Enyimba City Youths 5 Hours Marathon Praise" during a visit to her office.

Rev. Onu-Onwuchekwa said the

present administration is creating opportunities for youths to grow, contribute to society, and become responsible leaders in the future. She noted that Governor Otti's efforts are aimed at building a better future for young people across the state.

She encouraged the organisers to extend their activities beyond Aba Zone and involve youths from all the 17 local government areas of Abia State.

According to her, young people should be guided towards productive activities and discouraged from actions that could damage their future or the

image of the state.

The Diaspora Commission boss also described the marathon praise programme as a positive initiative and expressed hope that it would become an annual event in the state.

Earlier, the leader of the delegation, Councilor representing Eziana Ward 1, Hon. Anthony Ejiogu said the purpose of the visit was to invite Rev. Onu-Onwuchekwa to the forthcoming "Enyimba City Youths 5 Hours Marathon Praise" programme and seek her support.

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**EDITORIAL: Obi Of Onitsha At 85: Royalty Redefined**

## News

### Otti Is Grooming Youths For Future Leadership

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He explained that the event is a non-stop five-hour praise gathering expected to attract about 5,000 youths from different local government areas in Abia Zone, including Abia North, Abia South, Osisioma, Obingwa, Ukwu East, Ukwu West, and Ugwuagbo.

Hon. Ejiogu said the youths decided to organise the programme to appreciate God for the achievements of Governor Otti and the development taking place in the state under his administration.

According to him, the programme will also provide an opportunity for youths and Christians to pray for the continued peace, progress, and development of Abia State ahead of the 2027 general elections.

He further stated that the involvement of Christian leaders such as Rev. Onu-Onwuchekwa and the Chief of Staff to the Governor,

Pastor Caleb Ajiagba, in government, has encouraged many Christians to participate actively in politics and leadership.

The event is scheduled to hold on May 25, 2026, at Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic in Abia.

Responding, Rev. Onu-Onwuchekwa thanked the organisers for the visit and described the programme as an opportunity for Abians to thank God for the positive changes happening in the state. She urged the youths to remain united and avoid anything that could divide them.

The visit ended with prayers, a show of unity, and the presentation of branded items, including a T-shirt and face cap, to the Diaspora Commission boss.

Members of the Akpo-Aza Gospel Singers, including Hon. Agbeze, were also part of the delegation.

### Otti Celebrates Obi Of Onitsha At 85, Hails Integrity, Leadership

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He described the monarch as a father figure and trusted adviser whose counsel he regularly seeks on important governance matters.

The Governor also disclosed that his administration is reconstructing the historic Ojukwu Bunker as part of efforts to preserve the state's heritage and cultural history.

He reaffirmed his government's commitment to rebuilding Abia's image through infrastructure renewal, economic transformation, and people-oriented policies.

According to Otti, Abia has for years suffered reputational setbacks outside the state, but ongoing reforms and developmental projects are gradually changing the narrative.

In separate remarks, Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, who represents Abia South Senatorial District, and the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Caleb Ajiagba, described the celebration as a fitting tribute to a monarch who has brought dignity and prestige to traditional leadership.

They also praised Governor Otti for recognising individuals who have made meaningful contributions to society.

Former Minister of Education, Dr. Obiageli

Ezekwesili, also paid tribute to the monarch, describing him as a leader who has evolved into an institution through his character, intellect, and service.

She urged the people of Abia State to continue supporting Governor Otti's administration to sustain ongoing development efforts in the state.

Responding, Igwe Achebe expressed appreciation to the Abia State Government for the honour and recalled his long-standing relationship with Governor Otti dating back to their time at Diamond Bank, where he served as Chairman while Otti was Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer.

The monarch described the governor as "highly intelligent and hardworking," and urged Abians to continue supporting his administration.

He expressed confidence that the governor would achieve even greater milestones in developing the state.

The colourful event featured goodwill messages, cultural displays, and the cutting of the birthday cake, and was attended by traditional rulers, political leaders, clergy, and dignitaries from across the country.



Abia First Lady, Mrs. Priscilla Otti (C), with a delegation of FOMWAN led by the National Organising Committee Chairman, Hajiya Zeenat Odion Isimekhai, at her country home in Nvosi, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area

## FOMWAN To Hold 2026 National Conference In Abia

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

**The wife of Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, has given green light to the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria, FOMWAN, to host its 2026 Annual National Conference in the state.**

Mrs. Otti pledged her support recently, when she received a delegation of FOMWAN led by the National Organizing Committee Chairman, Hajiya Zeenat Odion Isimekhai, at her

countryhome Nvosi in Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area.

The FOMWAN team had visited to brief the First Lady on the association's vision and mission, and to formally seek her support for the conference scheduled to hold from 19th to 23rd August, 2026 at the Federal Government Girls College, Umuahia.

The event, themed, "Faith, Resilience and Responsibility: Muslim Women Responding to

Challenges," is expected to attract over 600 delegates from across Nigeria and the international community.

Mrs. Otti commended FOMWAN for its contributions to education, women empowerment, and community development since its establishment in 1985.

She described the group's work in promoting girl-child education, health, and humanitarian services as aligned with the core values of Gov. Alex Otti

administration.

"The government of Abia State is committed to partnerships that advance peace, inclusion, and development. We welcome FOMWAN to God's Own State and will work with you to ensure a safe, successful, and impactful conference," she said.

Mrs. Otti assured the delegation of a hitch-free conference and commended Abia's FOMWAN Amira, Hajiya Azezat Jimoh, for her efforts in securing the hosting right for the state.

Earlier, Hajiya Isimekhai said the visit was to formally acquaint Her Excellency with FOMWAN's vision, mission, and key programmes, and to seek collaboration for the annual conference.

Hajiya Isimekhai told the First Lady that FOMWAN is a faith-based, non-governmental organization focused on education and social development and commended Governor Otti for changing the narratives in Abia State.

#### Change of Name

I, formerly known and addressed as Miss Okonkwo Amarachi Evangelina now wish to be known and addressed as Mrs. Eberendu Amarachi Evangelina. All documents bearing my former name remain valid.

The general public should please take note

**Mrs. Eberendu Amarachi Evangelina**

### Ukwu La Ngwa Leaders Call For Unity, Endorse Otti's Second Term In Office

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The group also commended efforts toward the creation of Aba State, especially contributions made during constitutional review discussions at the National Assembly. They appreciated the roles played by political leaders, government officials, and diaspora groups in supporting these efforts.

The Union also expressed concern over divisions caused by political competition over time and called for reconciliation among stakeholders. They agreed on the need to resolve grievances, promote fairness, and strengthen unity for the overall progress of Ukwu la Ngwa people.

The meeting further discussed economic challenges such as inflation, unemployment, rising transport costs, and pressure on businesses. Members urged the government to strengthen agriculture, support small

and medium enterprises, improve industrial activity in Aba, and expand access to credit and electricity.

They also called for stronger development of agricultural value chains, including cassava, palm oil, and cashew processing, to reduce raw material exports and create more jobs. The group commended efforts to improve internally generated revenue while reducing multiple taxation and market harassment.

In a key political decision, the Union expressed appreciation to the national leadership of the Labour Party for granting Governor Alex Otti a free nomination form for the 2027 governorship election.

They described the gesture as a strong vote of confidence in the Governor's leadership and performance.

The group also urged political aspirants from Ukwu la Ngwa to withdraw

from the 2027 governorship race and instead support the Governor for a second term, in the interest of unity and continued progress.

The Union passed a unanimous vote of confidence on Governor Otti, praising his achievements in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and civil service reforms.

At the end of the meeting, the group formally endorsed Governor Otti as its preferred and sole candidate for the 2027 Abia State governorship election and pledged to mobilize strong support across Ukwu la Ngwa land for his re-election.

The Ukwu la Ngwa - Aba Union, reaffirmed its commitment to peace, unity, and development in Abia State and called on all sons and daughters of the area to work together in support of good governance and political stability in the state.

## News

### MOUAU VC Advises New Graduates Of Veterinary Medicine To Uphold Ethics Of Profession

By Okereke Kate

**T**he Vice-Chancellor of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, MOUAU Prof. Ursula Ngozi Akanwa, has charged new veterinary doctors of the university to uphold the ethics and values of their profession, while ensuring food safety and safeguarding public health.

Prof. Akanwa gave the charge while addressing graduands of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM), during the 12th Induction and oath-taking ceremony organized by the university in collaboration with the Veterinary Council of Nigeria (VCN) on recently. The VC, represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic, Prof. Nneoma Elechi Obasi, said the induction confers legal rights on the graduands to practice Veterinary Medicine and places on them the responsibility of safeguarding animal health, food systems and public health.

"Today is not merely ceremonial, it marks the transition of our graduands into professionals entrusted with the health of animals, the safety of our food

systems and the protection of public health', she said.

She stressed that the ceremony reflected the University's mandate to produce professionals with competence, character and conscience, describing the new veterinarians as critical to agricultural growth and national food security.

The VC also commended the Veterinary Council of Nigeria for granting full accreditation to the University's Veterinary programme and acknowledged the partnership with industry operators which supports practical training of MOUAU Vet students.

On its part, the Veterinary Council of Nigeria (VCN), led by its President, Prof. Mathew Adamu, and Ag. Registrar, Dr. Oladotun Fadipe, while issuing practicing license to the graduands, congratulated the University for regularly churning out quality DVM graduands, who are found worthy in learning and character.

Forty-eighty graduands were inducted into the profession, with Dr. Chimezie Amarachi Blessing emerging as the overall best graduating student and Dr. Aniorji Sandra Chinonso won the Farm Alert Award.

### Head Of Service Urges Public Servants To Embrace Excellence

By Ngozi Ndubueze

**T**he Abia State Head of Service, Benson Ojeikere, has called on public servants to remain dedicated to their duties and strive for excellence in service delivery.

Ojeikere made the call during a mentorship session organised to enhance productivity, efficiency, and professional growth within the public service.

He urged workers to eliminate inefficiency, avoid procrastination, and cultivate habits that promote competence and improved productivity in the workplace.

The Head of Service stressed the importance of discipline, sacrifice, commitment, and continuous self-development as essential ingredients for career advancement and effective performance in the Civil Service.

He assured members of the workforce that exceptional performance and impactful service would continue to attract recognition and reward.

Ojeikere also underscored the need for integrity, transparency, and accountability in building a more efficient and result-oriented public service.



Hon. Obi Aguocha, Member Representing Ikwuano/Umuahia Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives

### Otti, Labour Party Endorse Obi Aguocha For Second Term

By Blessing Anienwe

**T**he Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, working with the leadership of the Labour Party in the state, has given Hon. Obi Aguocha, who represents the Ikwuano/Umuahia Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, an automatic ticket to return to the National Assembly.

The decision was made public as the Labour Party began the sale of nomination forms and screening of candidates ahead of the next general elections.

This marks the beginning of the party's preparations for the elections as it opens the process for interested

aspirants to pick forms and contest for various positions. Party officials said the screening is designed to ensure that only qualified and capable candidates are chosen to represent the party.

The development also shows the party's readiness for the upcoming elections as it continues to organise its internal processes according to its timetable.

The party explained that the automatic ticket was based on Hon. Aguocha's strong support within the party, as well as his contributions to lawmaking and backing of the government's development programmes in Abia State.

Party leaders added that the decision is part of efforts to reward good

performance and promote effective representation at the National Assembly.

Speaking with journalists after receiving the ticket, Hon. Aguocha expressed appreciation to Governor Otti and the leadership of the Labour Party for the confidence placed in him.

He described the gesture as a great honour, saying, "This is a great honour done to me by the leader of our great party and the true liberator of Abia State, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, and the leadership of our party."

He said the ticket is a privilege he does not take for granted and stressed that it comes with greater responsibility to serve his constituency better and justify the trust placed in

him.

Hon. Aguocha also reaffirmed his commitment to the ideals of the Labour Party, noting that Governor Otti's administration has shown strong determination to improve governance and bring development to the people of Abia State.

He urged residents of the state to continue supporting the Labour Party, expressing confidence that the party will continue to deliver meaningful development across different sectors.

Political observers see the decision as a strong endorsement of Hon. Aguocha's performance and a move by the party to strengthen its position ahead of the next elections.

### Bayelsa Gets NECO's Excellence Award For Outstanding Academic Performance

From Owunna Goodness, Bayelsa

**B**ayelsa State has received an Award of Excellence from the National Examinations Council (NECO) in recognition of its exceptional performance in national examinations.

The award was presented to Governor Douye Diri, recently during the State Executive Council meeting at Government House, Yenagoa.

Presenting the award, the Commissioner for Education, Dr. Gentle Emeloh, explained that, NECO honoured Bayelsa and other deserving states as part of activities marking the examination body's 25th anniversary celebration.

According to him, Bayelsa earned the recognition for recording the highest percentage of candidates with five credits and above in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) conducted by NECO since the council's establishment.

Dr. Emeloh said, the recognition underscored NECO's commitment to encouraging excellence, accountability and continuous improvement in the education sector through healthy competition among states and institutions.

He further noted that, the award went beyond

acknowledging past achievements, describing it as a challenge to states and educational institutions to improve standards in line with NECO's vision of promoting quality education nationwide.

Giving further details, the commissioner disclosed that, Bayelsa ranked first nationally in the percentage of candidates who obtained five credits and above in NECO SSCE internal examinations since inception. He added that Ogun State came second, while Edo State placed third.

Responding, Governor Diri expressed appreciation to NECO, for the honour, describing the recognition as both encouraging and challenging.

He charged the Ministry of Education to sustain and improve on the achievement, stressing that any decline in standards would be unacceptable.

The governor also said, the award should serve as a wake-up call for the state to consolidate its growing reputation in the education sector, despite competing with states traditionally regarded as educationally advanced.

Diri urged education stakeholders in the state to remain committed to raising academic standards and ensuring continuous improvement in students performance.

## News

### From Training To Enterprise: Youths Begin New Journey In Fashion Industry

From Chinedu Kelechi, Aba

About 4,000 young Nigerians have completed intensive vocational training under the Fashion Future Program (FFP), an initiative of Ethnocentrique Limited in partnership with Mastercard Foundation aimed at promoting youth empowerment through the creative economy.

The five-month programme focused on garment making, shoemaking and leather works, equipping participants with technical and entrepreneurial skills designed to prepare them for sustainable careers in the fashion industry.

According to the programme coordinator, Mr. Jeremiah Ubumana, the training followed the National Skills Qualification (NSQ) framework and included business development, branding, digital marketing and mindset reorientation sessions to help participants transition from skill acquisition to enterprise development.

Speaking during the equipment distribution ceremony, Ubumana described the initiative as part of ongoing efforts to unlock youth potential and stimulate economic growth through fashion and innovation.

Participants received industrial sewing machines, cobbler tools, leather kits and other production equipment to support the establishment of their businesses after graduation.

For many beneficiaries, the handover ceremony marked a turning point in their lives, as participants expressed optimism about becoming self-reliant and contributing to their local economies.

One of the beneficiaries, Miss Enyinnaya Prisca, described the moment as the beginning of a new chapter in her life, saying the tools would enable her to establish her own business.

Another beneficiary, Miss Rejoice Hafuruchi, expressed excitement after

receiving her sewing machine kit.

"When they called my name and handed over the machine, I almost cried. I remembered the struggles I passed through before now.

Many times, I wanted to give up because there was no money and no opportunity. But today, I feel empowered. I now have something I can proudly call my own and a skill that can feed me for life," she said.

She thanked the organisers of the programme, including Ethnocentrique Limited and Mastercard Foundation, as well as the state government for creating an enabling environment for youths to thrive.

Other beneficiaries also expressed joy over the opportunity, describing the programme as a life-changing experience that had brought their dreams closer to reality.

Ubumana noted that beyond acquiring vocational skills, the graduates are expected to create employment opportunities, support local supply chains and contribute to economic activities within their communities.

He added that the Fashion Future Program demonstrates the growing role of the creative industry in addressing unemployment and empowering young Africans through sustainable enterprise initiatives.

According to him, the programme reflects a broader vision of using fashion as a vehicle for inclusion, innovation and economic transformation across Africa.

"A new generation of entrepreneurs is emerging — not from corporate boardrooms, but from tailoring workshops, leather studios and community training centres," he said.

"And with every garment sewn, every shoe crafted and every business launched, the future is gradually being stitched into existence."

## Emetu Visits, Hails Emeka Kalu In Bende

By Charles Ogbonya

The Deputy Governor of Abia State, Ikechukwu Emetu, has described a political gathering at the residence of Labour Party senatorial aspirant, Dr. Emeka Charles Kalu, in Bende Local Government Area as an "assembly of eagles."

Emetu made the remark during a courtesy visit to the country home of Dr. Kalu in Bende Town, where he met with party faithful, political stakeholders and supporters drawn from different parts of Abia North Senatorial Zone.

Speaking during the visit, the deputy governor described Dr. Kalu as a brother, friend and political associate, noting that he was pleased to be in Bende to interact and deliberate with the Labour Party aspirant on issues concerning the future of the zone and the state.

Emetu expressed appreciation for the warm reception accorded him and commended the calibre of personalities present at the gathering.

"I'm very happy to be here. The purpose of my visit is to see my brother and dear friend, Dr. Emeka Charles Kalu, who is an aspirant for the Abia North Senatorial seat under the



The Deputy Governor of Abia State, Ikechukwu Emetu

Labour Party. I'm also delighted to witness this gathering of eagles," he stated.

Earlier in his remarks, the Director-General of the Dr. Emeka Charles Kalu Campaign Organisation, popularly known as "Ukwu Rocks," described the senatorial aspirant as a man widely loved and accepted across Abia North.

According to him, the large turnout of supporters and stakeholders from various local government areas was a reflection of the confidence the people have in Dr. Kalu's leadership qualities and vision for the zone.

"We have seen a man after the hearts of the people, our own dear Emeka Charles Kalu. He is a man of the people who has won the hearts of the entire Abia North

electorate. Do not be surprised that you came to see one man and ended up meeting all of us here. We came from different local government areas to identify with him," he said.

He lamented what he described as years of poor representation in the Senate and stressed the resolve of the people to support Dr. Kalu's aspiration in order to ensure effective and quality representation for Abia North.

In their separate goodwill messages, Hon. Obinna Ekekwe, Mr. Elekwa Idika, Hon. Mike Eze and Mr. Chuzzy Igboko, commended Governor Alex Otti for what they described as his transformational leadership in the state.

They particularly applauded the administration's achievements in road

infrastructure, governance reforms and the restoration of peace across Abia, adding that the ongoing development deserved the support of all well-meaning citizens.

The speakers also appealed to the Labour Party leadership to grant Dr. Kalu the party's ticket for the Abia North Senatorial Zone ahead of future elections.

Speaking further, the founder of ECK Foundation and Labour Party senatorial aspirant, Dr. Kalu, said the Labour Party remained a strong and progressive political platform because of the achievements recorded by Governor Otti's administration.

According to him, the governor has changed the narrative of governance in Abia State through purposeful leadership and developmental projects.

"Dr. Alex Otti has changed the narrative in Abia State. We shall all come out en masse to vote for him again because he has done enormously well," Kalu stated.

The visit attracted party members, supporters and political stakeholders from Bende and neighbouring communities, with discussions centred on unity, political collaboration and the future of the Labour Party in Abia North Senatorial Zone.

## Nzuko Arochukwu Women Wing Worldwide Visits Abia First Lady

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

The Nzuko Arochukwu Women Wing Worldwide, led by its President General, Ezinne Onyekwere Olaedo, has paid a courtesy visit to the wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, in her country home of Nvosi in Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area.

The delegation visited to formally intimate Mrs. Otti of their solidarity and support for the present administration, as well as to brief her on the outcome of the union's recent election.

Speaking during the visit, the president general congratulated Mrs. Otti on her role in supporting Governor Alex Otti's development agenda and commended her for

championing women's empowerment and social welfare initiatives across the state.

She said the women of Arochukwu, both at home and in the diaspora, were united in backing policies that promote peace, education, and economic growth.

"We are here today to assure you of our unwavering solidarity and to inform you of the peaceful conclusion of our election.

The new leadership is committed to fostering unity among Arochukwu women and collaborating with government efforts to uplift our communities," the president general stated.

Mrs. Onyekwere also

solicits the Abia First Lady's support to the Union's skills acquisition centre at Ugwuavo with an industrial oven for bakeries and sachet water production machine.

These, she explained would help to ameliorate youths unemployment, poverty and at the same time contributes to the economic growth of the state.

Mrs. Otti, while receiving the delegation, thanked them for their visit and praised Nzuko Arochukwu Women Wing Worldwide for its commitment to community development and women's participation in governance.

She encouraged the newly elected executives to

use their platform to advance the welfare of women and children in Arochukwu and beyond.

The governor's wife, reaffirmed her commitment to partnering with women groups and socio-cultural organizations to drive inclusive development in Abia State.

In her remarks, the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Women Affairs, Mrs. Chinenye Nwaka, commended Nzuko Arochukwu Women Wing Worldwide for supporting the administration of Governor Alex Otti. She advised that their support will amount to nothing without getting their permanent voter card ready and to encourage everyone within their circle to do the same.

# Editorial

## Obi Of Onitsha At 85: Royalty Redefined

**A**t a time when leadership across many spheres of society is increasingly defined by fleeting influence, self-interest, and shrinking public trust, the life and reign of His Royal Majesty, Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe, CFR, mni, Agbogidi, Obi of Onitsha, stand as a compelling testament to dignity, vision, service, and enduring statesmanship.

As the revered monarch marked his 85th birthday on May 14, 2026, tributes poured in from across Nigeria and beyond, celebrating not merely the longevity of a royal father, but the remarkable journey of a man who has redefined traditional leadership in contemporary Africa. Among the most profound was the tribute by Anya-Ndi-Igbo, the socio-political and development-oriented organization that rightly described Agbogidi as "the people's monarch."

Indeed, few traditional rulers in Nigeria's modern history have combined intellectual depth, corporate excellence, cultural pride, and moral authority with such elegance and consistency.

Before ascending the throne of his forefathers as the 21st Obi of Onitsha in 2002, Igwe Achebe had already distinguished himself globally in the corporate world. His illustrious career with the Royal Dutch Shell Group, where he served as Director in various capacities, prepared him for a role that would eventually transcend palace walls and ethnic boundaries. His transition from boardroom leadership to royal stewardship remains one of the most seamless examples of service-driven reinvention in Nigerian public life.

Over the past 24 years on the throne, Agbogidi has transformed the traditional institution into a platform for social progress, cultural renaissance, peacebuilding, and intellectual engagement. He has consistently demonstrated that royalty is not merely ceremonial, but a sacred responsibility rooted in service to humanity.

One of the most enduring features of his reign has been his ability to preserve the rich cultural heritage

of Onitsha while embracing the realities of a rapidly changing world. Under his watch, the annual Ofala Festival evolved from a local celebration into an internationally recognized cultural event attracting tourists, scholars, diplomats, and global admirers of African heritage. Through this, the Obi has projected the dignity and sophistication of Igbo civilization onto the global stage.

Yet, beyond culture and pageantry lies the deeper essence of his leadership – compassion, intellect, and commitment to human development. Agbogidi's abiding faith in education has remained central to his philosophy of leadership. His conviction that no child should be denied access to quality education because of poverty inspired the establishment of developmental and educational support initiatives within his community. It is a philosophy undoubtedly shaped by his own exceptional academic pedigree, having attended globally respected institutions such as Stanford and Columbia universities.

In a nation often divided along ethnic, political, and religious lines, the Obi of Onitsha has also emerged as a voice of moderation, wisdom, and national unity. His interventions on national issues have consistently reflected courage, balance, and statesmanship. He has served Nigeria in numerous capacities beyond the throne, representing the country's interests in bilateral and multilateral engagements while offering counsel on governance, peace, and development.

Importantly, Agbogidi's reign has restored prestige to traditional leadership at a time when many questioned its relevance. Through personal discipline, humility, refinement, and integrity, he has shown that traditional rulers can still serve as moral compasses and custodians of societal values.

At 85, the Obi of Onitsha remains mentally alert, physically graceful, and intellectually vibrant – qualities many younger leaders struggle to sustain. His life continues to inspire not only the people of Onitsha and Alaigbo, but Nigerians everywhere who yearn for purposeful leadership anchored on wisdom and character.

As he journeys steadily toward the revered league of nonagenarians, Nigeria celebrates not just a monarch, but an institution; not merely a custodian of tradition, but a builder of bridges between the past and the future.

For history will surely remember Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe as one of the finest embodiments of enlightened royalty in modern Africa; a monarch whose crown has been defined less by splendour and more by service.

LETTERS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:  
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## Need For More Abia Shuttle Buses On Umuahia–Aba Route

Dear Editor,

**I**wish to use your widely read newspaper to sincerely appreciate the Governor of Abia State, Alex Otti, for introducing the Abia shuttle buses. This programme has helped many people by making transportation easier, safer, and more affordable for Ndi Abia.

The Abia shuttle buses have greatly reduced the stress and difficulties people face in transportation, especially workers who travel daily between Aba and Umuahia. Before now, many people spent a lot of money and wasted much time travelling from one city to another. But with the introduction of the shuttle buses, transportation has become easier, faster, and cheaper for many residents of the state.

Traders, students, civil servants, and business people can now travel more comfortably and at a lower cost. The buses have also helped many families reduce their daily transport expenses at a time when the cost of living is very high. This good initiative clearly shows that the government of Alex Otti truly cares about the welfare, comfort, and wellbeing of the people of Abia State.

However, I would like to humbly appeal to the state government to provide more buses for the Umuahia-to-Aba route. Many people travel from Umuahia to Aba every day for business, work, and other important activities. Since Aba is a major commercial city, the demand for transportation on this route is always very high.

Most times, passengers spend long hours waiting at the bus stop at gate because the available buses are not enough to carry everyone. This often causes delays, overcrowding, and unnecessary stress for commuters. Some workers, traders, and people even arrive late to their offices, shops, schools, and businesses because of the shortage of buses.

Providing more buses on this route will help reduce these problems and make movement easier and more comfortable for the people. It will also support business activities and improve the daily lives of many residents who depend on the shuttle buses for their daily movement.

Once again, I sincerely appreciate Governor Alex Otti for the good work he is doing in Abia State. His administration has continued to introduce programmes and policies that are making life better for the people, especially in transportation. I hope this humble appeal will be favourably considered for the benefit and comfort of Ndi Abia.

Ifeanyi Ogidi  
Write from Umuahia

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## Abuja Digest

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### NJC Recommends 12 Judges For Elevation To Court Of Appeal

The National Judicial Council (NJC) has recommended the elevation of 12 judges to the Court of Appeal in a move aimed at strengthening Nigeria's judiciary and improving justice delivery across the country.

The decision was reached at the Council's 111th meeting held recently, under the chairmanship of the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun.

In a statement issued by the NJC's Deputy Director of Information, Kemi Babalola-Ogedengbe, the Council disclosed that the names of the recommended judges have been forwarded to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for approval.

The judges nominated for elevation are Justices Emeka Nwite, James Kolawole Omotosho, Yakubu Mohammed, Abodunde Oluwatoyin, Ajuwa Raphael, Abua Ojie, Ijohor Jennifer, Shuaibu Bala, Buba Njane, Kado Sanusi, Ademola Enikuomehin and Dadom Veronica.

The Council also approved the appointment of Christine Ende as a Judge of the High Court of Benue State, alongside two nominees for appointment as Kadis of the Sharia Court of Appeal in Katsina State.

According to the NJC, the appointments are intended to fill vacancies created by retirements and elevations within the judiciary while enhancing the efficiency of courts nationwide.

The council further extended the tenure of Justice Ijeoma Agugua as Acting Chief Judge of Imo State for another three months, from March 26 to June 26, 2026, pending the appointment of a substantive Chief Judge.

The NJC commended Justice Ononeze-Madu for refusing to be sworn in in violation of constitutional provisions, describing the action as a demonstration of integrity and respect for the rule of law.

It also urged the Imo State Judicial Service Commission to expedite the process of appointing a substantive Chief Judge to ensure stability and judicial independence in the state.

On disciplinary matters, the council rejected appeals filed by eight judges of the Imo State Judiciary seeking reversal of their compulsory retirement over allegations of age falsification.

The affected judges were sanctioned during the council's 109th meeting in June 2025 after investigations revealed that they altered their dates of birth to unlawfully extend their years in service.

However, the NJC reinstated Justice T.I. Nze of the Customary Court of Appeal after reviewing fresh evidence presented before its committee.

The council also sanctioned two judges for judicial misconduct.

Justice Ibrahim D. Shekarau of the Nasarawa State High Court was suspended for one year without pay after he was found guilty of granting an ex-parte order deemed to have violated judicial procedures and due process.

Similarly, Justice Edward A.E. Okpe of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory was suspended for one year without pay for breaching fair hearing principles in a matrimonial dispute.

According to the NJC, investigations established that both judges acted contrary to the Revised Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers.

In another development, the Council directed the Inspector-General of Police to investigate and prosecute one Mbadiwe Ossai over alleged perjury.

Four legal practitioners — Adebayo Williams Adewale, Dr. Peter N. Ekemezie, Dr. Martin Odika and Muhammad Hamza Ahmad-Gana — were also referred to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee for allegedly filing frivolous petitions against judicial officers.

The Council further barred a serial petitioner, Yusuf Isa, from submitting additional petitions to the NJC.

Meanwhile, the NJC clarified that the Nigerian Constitution does not prohibit retired public servants from being appointed as judicial officers.

Under a newly adopted policy, any retired public servant seeking judicial appointment must have at least 10 years remaining before reaching the mandatory retirement age. Applicants are also required to disclose criminal convictions, employment history, financial status and other relevant obligations.

## FG, UNICEF Flag Off 2026 Children's Day, Insist On Inclusion, Family Values

Federal Government (FG), in collaboration with (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) UNICEF and other development partners, has officially flagged off activities for the 2026 National Children's Day celebration, with a strong call for inclusion, child protection, and the promotion of family values as pillars for national development.

Speaking during a press briefing and intergenerational dialogue held in Abuja recently, the Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Iman Suleiman-Ibrahim, said this year's theme, "Future Now: Promoting Inclusion for Every Nigerian Child," reflects the commitment of the Tinubu administration to ensuring that no Nigerian child is left behind.

She stressed that government policies and programmes are being tailored towards guaranteeing equal opportunities for children irrespective of gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, or economic background.

According to the Minister, children remain central to Nigeria's future, noting that they account for more than 40 per cent of the nation's population.

She explained that the Federal Government is strengthening efforts in child protection, education, healthcare, nutrition, and social welfare in line with both local and international legal frameworks, including the Child Rights Act, the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Suleiman-Ibrahim also announced the designation of 2026 as the Year of Families and Social Development, describing the family as the foundation of every child's emotional, moral, and social development.

"The family is the child's first school, first point of identity, and first source of emotional support," she said, adding that stronger family systems are critical to raising responsible citizens and building a stable society.



Honourable Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajija Iman Suleiman-Ibrahim during a press briefing and intergenerational dialogue held recently in Abuja

UNICEF Acting Chief of Child Protection, Mona Aika, called for sustained investment in child welfare, education, healthcare, immunisation, and nutrition, while Girl Effect Nigeria reaffirmed its commitment to supporting adolescent girls through empowerment and leadership initiatives.

She urged stakeholders to create more opportunities for children, particularly girls, to participate in conversations and decisions affecting their future.

Also speaking, the Director of Programme Operations at Save the Children, Joshua Anar, stressed the need for closer collaboration among government institutions, civil society organisations, and communities to address abuse, neglect, violence, and harmful practices affecting vulnerable children.

Representatives of the

Federal Ministry of Health highlighted ongoing interventions in maternal and child healthcare, immunisation, and nutrition, while Girl Effect Nigeria reaffirmed its commitment to supporting adolescent girls through empowerment and leadership initiatives.

As part of activities marking the 2026 Children's Day celebration, the Ministry launched the FUTURE NOW Podcast, a youth-driven digital platform aimed at amplifying the voices of children and adolescents on issues affecting their wellbeing and aspirations.

During the interactive session, children raised concerns over the impact of economic hardship on families and access to quality education.

Responding, the Minister acknowledged the challenges and called for shared responsibility among government, parents, communities, and development partners in addressing issues affecting children.

She further commended the Nigerian National Children's Parliament for promoting civic engagement and leadership among young Nigerians.

Activities for the 2026 Children's Day celebration are expected to continue nationwide until May 27, with programmes including advocacy campaigns, mentorship sessions, school engagements, youth forums, sporting activities, and a novelty football match designed to promote teamwork, inclusion, and



Honourable Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajija Iman Suleiman-Ibrahim (middle), with a UNICEF representative and other partners during a press briefing and intergenerational dialogue held recently in Abuja

## Opinion

# Atiku's Politics Of Bitterness

By Lawal Ogiengbon

**T**here Is Nothing That Atiku Abubakar craves more than being President of Nigeria. There is nothing he would not do in order to get to the highest office in the land. People dream to become great and attain heights hitherto not reached by other mortals. It is a good dream, but it becomes something else once it turns to obsession.

To Atiku, becoming president has become an obsession ever since he was told by marabouts (Islamic clerics versed in predicting what will happen in future) that one day he would, speaking euphemistically, sit on the throne. He was giving this prediction many years ago and since then he has been plotting to become the first citizen.

The Presidency is not a traditional stool which people come into by primogeniture, based on the fact of being the firstborn male child. There is also no ruling house that can lay claim to being next in line to assume the Presidency. You attain the Presidency by testing your popularity at the polls where the electorate will decide the contestants' fate. The route to the Presidency is not easy.

It is long and tortuous. You want to know how tough? You need not look further. Just recall what President Bola Tinubu went through in his journey to the top in 2023. Atiku as a veteran contestant for the exalted seat knows that the presidential race is not easy, no matter what his marabouts might have told him. It is one thing for marabouts to predict, it is another thing for it to have the seal of God.

No matter how strong or powerful a priest is, he cannot be above God. It is only God that says something and it comes to pass. Priests whether of the Islamic or Christian faith can say whatever they like; make all the predictions and invoke the name of God over what they do, the fact remains that they remain mere mortals like you and me. They can and will never be God, even though some of them like to play God by coming out with predictions without divine backing.

Every man is free to believe whatever he likes to believe. So, I hold nothing against Atiku for believing his marabouts. The thing is he has allowed their prophecy to become the

fulcrum of his life. This is why he has been desperate to become president since 1992. From the defunct SDP presidential primary in Jos, Plateau State, in 1992 to that of PDP in 2022, and others in between on different party platforms, Atiku has become a recurring decimal in the race for presidential power.

is preparing for another one now, on the platform of the ADC coalition in the run-up to the 2027 presidential election. He thought he would pair again with Peter Obi as he did in 2019. They contested then on the platform of PDP. But Obi, apparently after seeing the light, dumped Atiku and the ADC coalition for NDC. As usual, Obi explained away his action for jumping ship again, saying the ADC coalition had become a play thing for the ruling APC, INEC and the judiciary.

With these 'forces' at work, he said there was no way the coalition could make a mark in the 2027 elections. He is right that the coalition is going nowhere in the coming elections, but was only giving the dog a bad name in order to hang it in his claim that APC, INEC and the judiciary were behind the travails of the coalition. Obi, who like Atiku contested the 2023 presidential election which they both lost to the incumbent, left the ADC coalition on realising that its 2027 presidential ticket is not open to a free and fair contest, no matter what its leaders say in public. The coalition is the brainchild of Atiku and it is for the main purpose of driving his presidential dream, which some now describe as

**“ You attain the Presidency by testing your popularity at the polls where the electorate will decide the contestants' fate. ”**

fantasy, in the forthcoming election.

Rather than play the elder brother and leader which is how his 2019 running-mate Obi addresses him, Atiku is bellyaching over the former Anambra governor's defection to NDC. There was no name he did not call Obi for taking that step. He equally berated NDC for zoning its presidential ticket to the South. The zoning, he said, was meant to solely benefit an individual. The individual, you guessed right, is Obi, who he had expected would be tied to his apron string in his inordinate bid for president.

Obi decided to free himself and Atiku is beside himself with rage. He was unsparing of Obi and NDC for 'selling out', which is how he perceived the party's zoning of its presidential ticket to the South. Why is Atiku bothered with where another party zoned its presidential ticket to? What sin has NDC committed by its decision? Why is Atiku bitter that the zoning is to smoothen the way for Obi's emergence as NDC's presidential candidate? Is NDC beholden to Atiku that the party cannot take its own decisions? What is Atiku's business with the internal affairs of another party?

Atiku should concern himself with the internal affairs of the coalition and stop poke-nosing in NDC's domestic issues. It is within NDC's power to zone its presidential ticket to the South, and it has done so for four years (2027-2031). It is not Atiku's business whether or not the arrangement is tidy. He should stop crying over spilt milk and come to terms with the fact that he would also have Obi and NDC to contend with on the ballot in next year's presidential election.

All he wanted was Obi as partner to confront Tinubu and APC in the presidential poll. Atiku's plan has backfired with Obi dumping him and the coalition to pursue his own ambition on a different platform. Adamu Waziri, the apostle of politics without bitterness, will turn in his grave with the way Atiku is spewing bile over Obi's defection to NDC and the party's zoning of its presidential ticket to the South to favour its new intake. Sorry, Wazirin Adamawa, if we can still call him that, some predictions are not meant to be.

## Focus

# Plotting Against the Behemoth

By Dickson Paul

**T**he efforts by opposition leaders in Abia State to take over the governance of the state in 2027 reveal how power-hungry Nigerian politicians can be. This can be described as a move against a political behemoth. The question remains: how far can they go? Some observers of Abia politics view the gathering of the opposition party, the APC, as a widely publicised meeting of political heavyweights who, after years of disunity and political inactivity, are now trying to regroup and reposition themselves. In every working democracy, the presence of opposition parties is welcome. Governor Dr. Alex Otti is not known to be against opposition politics.

The opposition leaders in Abia State are certainly making efforts, but many people doubt whether they can achieve their main objective – becoming a formidable force against the ruling Labour Party in the 2027 general elections.

The governor appears unconcerned about the emerging alliance, which many describe as fragile, especially as the opposition continues to struggle with internal suspicion and personal ambitions among its key members.

There is no doubt that serious political consultations and strategies are ongoing. However, many Abians believe that before 2023, the state was drifting and desperately needed credible leadership. They believe that, by divine grace, Dr. Alex Otti emerged to rescue the state from the prolonged rule of the PDP, which many felt left the people hopeless.

Abians became disillusioned with the performance of the PDP government, and the 2023 election provided an opportunity for peaceful democratic change.

One major factor behind the demand for change was the perceived failure of the PDP administration to meet the expectations of the people. There was therefore a strong desire for purposeful leadership that could restore hope, provide responsive governance, and manage public resources responsibly.

What the opposition may not fully understand is that the current administration under Alex Otti has built a strong

support base of committed democrats and patriots who believe the state has been saved from imminent collapse.

There are moments in history when well-meaning citizens unite against poor governance, and many believe that was what happened during the last election. People from different backgrounds came together to rescue the state from further decline.

Before now, Abia State was in a condition many considered embarrassing. Political and personal differences were set aside in the interest of saving the state.

Some individuals had treated Abia State like a family business. Today, the opposition is trying to reorganise and regain relevance. While many political heavyweights are in the opposition, their activities do not appear to threaten the current government. Instead, they provide an opportunity to test their popularity and acceptance among the people.

The government and many Abians view the opposition as divided, lacking cohesion, vision, and the capacity to offer a credible alternative to the ruling Labour Party.

Some also believe that the opposition, which had previously lost relevance, may eventually align itself with the Labour Party. For now, Abians continue to observe their activities with keen interest.

Supporters of the Labour Party often dismiss the opposition as sore losers and political adventurers.

Other political observers see the renewed alliance as a move driven by necessity, especially among politicians seeking to revive their political ambitions despite lacking clear ideological conviction.

To many, the alliance appears to be motivated more by personal interest and political survival than by genuine concern for the people – a trend common in Nigerian politics today.

Some critics even argue that the opposition is united

mainly by greed.

Nevertheless, opposition remains an important part of any democratic system. Without opposition, democracy cannot thrive at any level of government.

The Abia State Government deserves commendation for allowing opposition voices to operate freely as part of the democratic process.

Constructive criticism from the opposition can help promote transparency, accountability, and good governance when based on facts and genuine concern for the public interest.

The opposition also serves as a watchdog in a functional democracy by checking the excesses of the ruling party. However, such criticism must be based on facts rather than bitterness, political hatred, or personal ambition.

Many people in Abia State continue to praise Governor Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, whom they describe as a visionary leader committed to transforming the state through determination and purposeful leadership.

Driven by vision and commitment, Otti's goal has been to build a "New Abia" that citizens at home and abroad can proudly identify with. From his first day in office, his policies and programmes have reflected a clear sense of direction and purpose aimed at repositioning the state. Observers believe that the governor's major motivation is service to humanity. His impact is said to be visible across different sectors, with many residents experiencing positive changes.

The present administration in Abia State has given many people renewed hope. Governor Otti is widely seen as passionate about serving the people and determined to position the state among the leading states in Nigeria.

Supporters describe his leadership style as exemplary and unique.

Otti is regarded as a people-oriented leader committed to the all-round development of the state. The transformation taking place in Abia State is seen by many as inspiring, and they believe the legacies of his administration will remain reference points for years to come.

## Feature

# The Debt That Eats Tomorrow

By Dakuku Peterside

**T**here are moments when statistics stop being numbers; they become warnings. Nigeria is in such a moment. Its debt profile is no longer a distant concern for experts. Debt has entered the marketplace, the classroom, the hospital ward, the transport fare, and the food basket. It has also entered the anxious calculations of families trying to survive another month.

This is why Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II's recent warning deserves more than casual attention. Sanusi speaks with the authority of experience: a former Central Bank Governor who understands the mechanics of money, a public intellectual who has long warned against fiscal indiscipline, and a traditional ruler who now sees how macroeconomic choices descend into everyday hardship. At The Niche 2026 annual lecture in Lagos, he asked the question Nigeria can no longer avoid: if removing fuel subsidies was meant to free up public resources, why is the government still borrowing so heavily? His warning was sharp: "You cannot remove wastages and continue borrowing."

The urgency of Sanusi's warning has been sharpened by the latest borrowing approvals. In March 2026, the National Assembly approved President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's request for a fresh \$6 billion external financing package, made up of a \$5 billion structured facility from First Abu Dhabi Bank and a roughly \$1 billion UK export finance facility arranged by Citibank for the rehabilitation of the Lagos Port Complex and Tin Can Island Port. The stated objectives were budget support, priority infrastructure financing, and the refinancing of more expensive obligations. Barely weeks later, in April 2026, both chambers of the National Assembly approved another \$516.3 million external loan for sections of the Sokoto-Badagry superhighway, following an earlier request tied to a syndicated Deutsche Bank facility.

These approvals may be defended as necessary instruments for infrastructure and fiscal stabilisation, but they also deepen the central anxiety: Nigeria is still expanding its external obligations at a time when total public debt had already climbed to about N159.28 trillion, or roughly \$111 billion, by the end of 2025. The issue, therefore, is not whether roads, ports, and infrastructure matter; they do. The issue is whether a country already spending heavily on debt service can keep adding new obligations without a more convincing revenue strategy, stricter project discipline, and clearer proof that every borrowed dollar will generate the productivity required to repay it. That should haunt Abuja. The data is too stark to ignore.

Debt itself is not evil. Serious nations borrow to build railways, ports, power systems, schools, hospitals, and industries. Trouble begins when borrowing replaces discipline, when loans fund consumption rather than production, when debt rises faster than revenue, when the government removes one fiscal burden but creates another, and when citizens endure pain yet see no promised progress.

The 2026 budget deepens the concern. President Bola Tinubu signed a N68.32 trillion appropriation

into law in April 2026, with N15.8 trillion set aside for debt service, N15.4 trillion for recurrent expenditure and N32.2 trillion for capital expenditure. On paper, the capital allocation appears ambitious. In reality, the size of the debt-service bill tells a harder story: before the government builds, hires, repairs, equips, or protects, creditors must be paid first. That is how debt quietly rearranges national priorities.

The main consequence of excessive debt is reduced public investment. Each naira used for debt servicing cannot fund classrooms, hospitals, rural roads, police posts, power projects, or water schemes. Payments to creditors go unnoticed, and monuments remain standing when coupons are settled. Yet the country's potential is quietly curtailed.

A hospital without drugs is a fiscal story. A school without teachers or materials is a fiscal story. A road abandoned after political fanfare is a fiscal story. Security agencies with logistics problems are a fiscal story. Debt is not just an economic category. It is a decision about who waits, who suffers, and whose future is postponed.

This situation is particularly difficult given Nigeria's entrenched poverty. According to the

**“ Trouble begins when borrowing replaces discipline, when loans fund consumption rather than production, when debt rises faster than revenue, when the government removes one fiscal burden but creates another, and when citizens endure pain yet see no promised progress. ”**

National Bureau of Statistics' recent "Multidimensional Poverty Index," 63 per cent of Nigerians—about 133 million people—are multidimensionally poor. In rural areas, poverty reaches 72 per cent, while child poverty is at 67.5 per cent. These statistics directly illustrate why fiscal policy decisions are crucial: with such widespread deprivation, the country cannot tolerate excessive borrowing, inefficient spending, or projects that fail to create real opportunities.

The second cost is a suffocated enterprise. When the government borrows heavily from domestic markets, it competes directly with businesses for access to credit. As a result, banks often prefer the safer option of government instruments over lending to manufacturers, farmers, exporters, and small firms. This competition for funds causes interest rates to rise, slows private investment, defers expansion,

prevents job creation, and starves innovation.

This is how a nation with strong entrepreneurial energy can remain trapped in low productivity. Nigeria's economy grew 4.07 per cent in Q4 2025. The non-oil sector accounted for 97.13 per cent of real GDP. That should inspire confidence. Yet growth without broad-based jobs, affordable credit, and better household welfare stays politically fragile. People do not eat GDP. They experience growth through jobs, wages, prices, services, and security.

The labour market tells a cautionary story. Under the revised methodology, Nigeria's Q4 2025 unemployment rate was about 5.3 per cent, masking deeper vulnerabilities. Informal employment and youth unemployment are very high. In a country where most survive on fragile, informal work, debt-driven inflation and weak public

Second, debt transparency must be non-negotiable. Citizens deserve to know the terms, interest rates, timelines, contractors, project status, and expected returns of major borrowing. Public debt is not private paperwork. It is an obligation carried in the name of the people.

Third, the government must broaden revenue intelligently, not lazily. The answer is not to squeeze the poor or suffocate small businesses. Instead, expand the productive base, improve compliance, digitise collection, reduce leakages, and tax wealth more effectively. Citizens must see value for what they pay. Taxation without service delivery deepens resentment. Taxation tied to visible public value rebuilds the social contract.

Fourth, the government must curb its excesses. A country under debt pressure cannot maintain the theatre of abundance: bloated convoys, wasteful allowances, duplicated agencies, inflated contracts, ceremonial spending, and endless foreign trips. Fiscal discipline must start with the state. Leaders cannot demand sacrifice from citizens while the government acts as if austerity applies only to the governed.

Finally, Nigeria must put debt back in its proper place. Debt should be a tool, not a habit; a bridge, not a trap; an investment, not a survival mechanism. Debt should build the economy that will repay it, not become the economy itself. Debt remembers. It returns in future budgets, exchange rates, and inflation. It lingers in abandoned projects, underfunded schools, strained hospitals, and frustrated young people. Debt remembers long after speeches fade.

Nigeria still has choices. It has people, talent, markets, resources, geography, and entrepreneurial force. But potential does not pay debt. Discipline does. Productivity does. Trust does. Competent governance does.

The debt crisis is therefore not only about how much Nigeria owes. It is about what kind of country Nigeria wants to become. A nation may borrow to build tomorrow. But when it borrows to postpone hard choices, it merely invites tomorrow to arrive as a creditor.

The time to tame the debt is now—before it eats the future.

Dakuku Peterside is the author of *Leading in a Storm* and *Beneath the Surface*.

## News

### NUP Inaugurates Abia Newspapers Chapter

By Okechukwu ubani

**A**bia State recorded an important and memorable event with the official inauguration of the Nigeria Union of Pensioners (NUP), Abia Newspaper Chapter.

The ceremony took place at the premises of the Abia Newspaper and Publishing Corporation and attracted union leaders, stakeholders, and retired journalists who once served the organization with dedication.

The atmosphere at the event was filled with joy and a sense of purpose, as old colleagues reunited and shared memories of their years in active service. Many of the retirees expressed happiness that they now have a platform to come together, support one another, and speak with one voice on issues affecting them.

Before the formal inauguration, the Electoral Officer of the National Union of Pensioners, Elder Uma Kalu, addressed the gathering. He encouraged members to remain united and committed to the growth of the chapter. According to him, unity and cooperation are key to achieving progress and solving common challenges. He described the inauguration as the beginning of better and more organized days for the pensioners.

Elder Uma Kalu also used the opportunity to inform members about important updates in the union. He reminded them that membership dues have been increased from one percent to two percent. He explained that this decision was reached during the National Delegates Conference held in Kano. He added that while some states have already started implementing the new rate, Abia State is yet to fully comply, and he urged members to support the process.

The chapter was then officially inaugurated by Elder Uma Kalu, marking a new phase for the retirees of the Abia Newspaper and Publishing Corporation. During the event, Sir Chijioke Osuagwu was elected as the Chairman of the chapter, alongside other executive members who will help in running the affairs of the union.

In his vote of thanks, the

newly elected Chairman, Sir Chijioke Osuagwu, expressed deep appreciation to the national body for making the inauguration possible. He assured members that his leadership would focus on unity, transparency, and the welfare of all retirees. He also promised that the chapter would work closely with the national leadership to ensure that members enjoy the benefits they deserve.

Also speaking at the event, the Abia State Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Pensioners, Elder C. N. Irondu, reminded the retirees that they now have a strong and recognized body to represent their interests. He stressed the importance of solidarity, repeating the union's guiding principle: "One pensioner is all pensioners, and all pensioners are one." He encouraged members to always channel their complaints and challenges through the chapter, assuring them that issues beyond the chapter would be taken to the state level for proper attention.

Some retirees who attended the event also shared their views. One of them, Mr. Israel Ochingwa, described the inauguration as a big step forward. He said it would help improve the welfare, unity, and continued relevance of retired workers of the Abia Newspaper and Publishing Corporation, who have spent many years contributing to journalism and public information.

Another retiree, who chose to remain anonymous, said the chapter is more than just a formal organization. According to him, it represents a new beginning where the experiences, contributions, and needs of members will be properly recognized and respected. He added that members are determined to build a strong, supportive, and caring community.

The event also provided an opportunity for members to discuss common challenges such as pension payments, healthcare, and general welfare. Many expressed hope that the new chapter would actively engage with the necessary authorities to address these issues.

The inauguration ended on a joyful and hopeful note, with members showing a



Some pensioners of the Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation during the inauguration of their chapter into the Nigeria Union of Pensioners (NUP) recently.

## We Will Not Allow Abia Return To The Old Order - Gov. Otti

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

**T**he Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti, has warned against any attempt to reverse the current developmental trajectory made by his administration, stressing that Abians must collectively protect the progress already achieved in the State.

Governor Otti gave the warning on Sunday, during the State Conference of Aba North Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Okpulu- Umuobo, Aba.

The Governor, who described his emergence in 2023 as an act of divine intervention, said his administration was on a "divine journey" to rebuild the state and reposition it for sustainable development.

He urged residents of the State to continue to support visionary leadership capable of sustaining the momentum of development beyond his tenure.

Governor Otti further emphasized that future leaders of the state would face greater expectations from the people, noting that governance in Abia must never return to what he described as the "old order".

"So anyone who makes an attempt to take us back, we will not allow it. And it's not about me; it's about all of us", Governor Otti said.

The Governor noted that his administration has restored the dignity and pride of Abians by reversing years of poor governance, neglect and negative public perception associated with the state.

He added that one of the major reasons he ventured into politics was the embarrassment and sympathy he constantly encountered whenever he identified himself as an indigene of Abia State.

Governor Otti stated that before the emergence of his administration in 2023, Abians were often viewed with pity across the country because of the state's poor condition and leadership failures.

"One of the major reasons I came to contest the election was that everywhere I went at that time and introduced myself as coming from Abia State, people started sympathizing with you. They said, 'You people have been unlucky'."

"It's not about being unlucky. It's the choice that we've made. And then I said, no, we can't continue to be unlucky. So we left what we were doing to come and see if we could rescue the state", the Governor said.

He noted that although his administration had not spent up to three years in office, the visible transformation across Abia had already altered public perception about the state and its people.

According to Governor Otti, the restoration of confidence and respect for Abians remains the greatest achievement of his administration.

The Governor assured residents that his administration would continue extending developmental projects to rural communities and hinterlands that had long been neglected.

He stressed that his government was only beginning its developmental journey,

describing ongoing infrastructural and economic reforms as "a tip of the iceberg".

"In a few days, we will be three years in office. Sometimes some people forget that we are under three years. By the time we have done eight years, I'm sure you can imagine what this place will look like."

"So some of the things that have not been done, don't worry. There are also a lot of streets that have not been touched. But then, we are getting into the hinterland now, and it (development) will continue like that", he added.

Governor Otti while reflecting on his political journey, recalled that many political observers initially doubted his chances because he was not regarded as a conventional politician.

The Governor attributed his eventual victory in the 2023 governorship election to divine intervention, insisting that leadership ultimately comes at God's appointed time.

"People actually didn't give us any chance. They said, 'Oh, he's not a politician. He doesn't know how to play the game.' Of course, we struggled two times. But at that time, we were learning the ropes", he said.

Governor Otti commended the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for supporting his administration, through the donation of a fully paid MRI machine to the Abia State teaching hospital Aba.

"We received an MRI machine for our teaching hospital in Aba. I understand the machine is on its way, but it has been paid for fully by the church. So I want to say thank you", the Governor disclosed.

He further called for

unity among Christian denominations, noting that all believers shared a common faith in Jesus Christ despite doctrinal differences.

"There are no major differences between what you believe in and what other churches believe in. We all believe in Jesus Christ. We believe in the Son of the Living God," he added.

In his sermon, an Elder of the church, Asuquo Udobong emphasized the core teachings and beliefs of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, urging members to remain steadfast in faith, charity, peace and righteous living despite global uncertainties and challenges.

Elder Asuquo who spoke extensively on the church's Articles of Faith, said members of the church believe in God the Eternal Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, stressing that individuals would be held accountable for their personal actions and sins.

He explained that salvation comes through the atonement of Jesus Christ and obedience to the principles and ordinances of the Gospel, including faith, repentance, baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Elder Asuquo also highlighted the church's belief in divine revelation, prophecy, healing, honesty, obedience to constituted authority and peaceful coexistence with people of other faiths and backgrounds, adding that the church remains committed to spreading the Gospel across the world irrespective of persecution or opposition.

The church service also featured the presentation of the Book of Mormon; a sacred text of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to Governor Otti.

# Photos Speak



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State ( C), National Chairman of Labour Party, Sen. Nenadi Usman ( 7th L), Hon. Alex Ikwechegh (6th L), National Secretary, Labour Party, Hon. Iheanacho Obioma and others, as Labour Party Leaders presented Abia Gov, Dr. Alex Otti with the Labour Party Governorship nomination form free of charge, ahead of the 2027 elections, at the Governor's Lodge in Abuja,



L-R: Former Senator, who represented Abia North, Sen. Mao Oluabunwa and Gov Alex Otti of Abia State, as Abia Gov attended the wedding ceremony of Barr. Samuel Oluabunwa, son of Sen. Mao Oluabunwa, a former Senator, who represented Abia North, held at the Cathedral Church of the Advent, Life Camp, Abuja



L-R: Sen. Enyinnaya Abaribe and Gov Alex Otti of Abia State, during Sen. Abaribe's formal collection of nomination forms under the platform of the Labour Party in Abia State ahead of the forthcoming electoral processes.



L-R: Wife of Abia Gov, Mrs Priscilla Otti, Obi of Onitsha, HRM. Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe and Gov Alex Otti of Abia, during the 85th birthday celebration of the Obi of Onitsha, HRM. Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe, organised by the Abia State Govt at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.



Obi of Onitsha, HRM. Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe (center) pose with his Obi in Council, during his 85th birthday celebration organised by the Abia State Govt at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.



Obi of Onitsha, HRM. Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe (center) pose with his Ndi Ozo, during his 85th birthday celebration, organised by the Abia State Govt at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.



L-R: House of Reps Member, Repr Arochukwu/Ohafia, Hon. Ibe Okwara Osonwa, Chief Dr. David Ogba Onuoha Bourdex and Mr Chima Anyaso, during the 85th birthday celebration of the Obi of Onitsha, HRM. Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe, organised by the Abia State Govt at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.



L-R: Senator Repr Abia South, Sen Enyinnaya Abairibe, Former Deputy Gov of Abia State, Sir Ude Oko Chukwu, Former Minister of Education, Dr. Mrs Oby Ezekwesili and others, during the 85th birthday celebration of the Obi of Onitsha, HRM. Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe, organised by the Abia State Govt at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.

Photos by: Chukwu Chidiebere

## Photos Speak



L-R: Speaker, Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon Emmanuel Emeruwa, the Aba Stake President, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Brother Sunny Ibe and Gov Alex Otti of Abia State, during the Abia Gov's visit to the hqters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at their Temple in Okpulo-Umobo, Aba, on the occasion of the Church's conference.



L-R: Gov Alex Otti of Abia State, National Woman Leader of Labour Party, Hilda Dokubo and Abia Gov's Wife, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, during the Labour Party National Convention held at International Conference Center Umuahia



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State received a gift from the Leadership of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at their Temple in Okpulo-Umobo, Aba, during the Abia Gov's visit to the hqters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at the Premises of the Temple in Okpulo-Umobo, Aba, on the occasion of the Church's conference.



R-L: Gov Alex Otti of Abia State, Speaker, Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Emmanuel Emeruwa, Abia SSG, Dr. Emmanuel Meribeole and Comm for Health, Professor Enoch, during the Abia Gov's visit to the hqters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at the Premises of the Temple in Okpulo-Umobo, Aba, on the occasion of the Church's conference.



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State (2nd R), Executive Chairman, Aba South LGA, Hon. Obialor Denis Anyanwu (1st R) and others, during the inspection of some ongoing road projects in Aba that are undergoing reconstructions by Abia, including, Umuchichi Road Off Okpulo-Umobo, Afule Road, Nigerian Breweries Road, Obohia Road, Eche Road and Borrow pit by Obohia road.



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State appreciating a little Girl that came out to welcome him, during the inspection of some ongoing road projects in Aba that are undergoing reconstructions by Abia Govt including, Umuchichi Road Off Okpulo-Umobo, Afule Road, Nigerian Breweries Road, Obohia Road, Eche Road and Borrow pit by Obohia road.



L-R: Abia State Deputy Gov, Engr Ikechukwu Emetu, House of Reps Aspirant for Bende Federal Constituency, Chima Anyaso and National Secretary, Labour Party, Hon. Iheanacho Obioma, during the Chima Anyaso formal collection of nomination forms ahead of the forthcoming electoral processes.



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State (2nd L) in company of others, holding a little Boy that came out to welcome him, during the inspection of some ongoing road projects in Aba that are undergoing reconstructions by Abia Govt including, Umuchichi Road Off Okpulo-Umobo, Afule Road, Nigerian Breweries Road, Obohia Road, Eche Road and Borrow pit by Obohia road.

## Religion

# Understanding Covenant Dimension of Prosperity!

By David Oyedepo

**From scriptures, we understand that prosperity in the Kingdom doesn't answer to fasting nor does it answer to prayer or prayer of agreement. It only answers to our understanding and practice of covenant details. What we are selling or the business we are involved in is not what determines our prosperity.**

No! It is the light under which we are operating that determines the results we get. As it is written, 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 swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day (Deuteronomy 8:18). Thus, the platform for wealth is released based on the covenant. When we step out into the covenant, we encounter the power to get wealth. Prosperity is not a promise we claim in prayers or with fastings and confession. No! It's a covenant we practise. That means, God has set a stage for us, but we must understand our part of it and then the power to realise the promise will be delivered to us. Spiritual Growth Guides

A covenant as it were is like a contract. So, it involves two or more people. In this case, it involves just you and God. God is the covenantor and we are the covenantee; that is, we are the beneficiary of the deal. All we need is a good understanding of what the covenant entails and we will be up in abundance. The Bible says, My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips (Psalm 89:34). God is a covenant keeper. His side of every covenant is forever secured; it is our side that is variable. But when we lay hold on the terms

that relate to us and apply ourselves to it, God is committed. And once we locate the covenant and we enter into it, our struggles will come to an end. Since that day in March 1981 when I saw the covenant of prosperity, I entered into my rest. We don't pray or fast for a covenant, we just enter into it. As it is written, And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about (2 Chronicles 15:12, 15).

What Then, Is The Covenant Dimension Of Prosperity?

The Covenant will Always Prevail: When God said to Abraham, ...Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing (Genesis 12:1-2). He moved as he was commanded yet he met famine there (Genesis 12:9-10). But in spite of that famine Abraham prevailed! As it is written, And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold (Genesis 13:2). Also, the Bible records that Isaac prevailed in famine, And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went

forward, and grew until he became very great: For he had possession of flocks, and possessions of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him (Genesis 26:1, 12-14). Christianity

Note that the covenant is stronger than any climate! There is no economic dearth or crisis that can break the efficacy of the covenant. Furthermore, in Jacob's time, ...the famine was sore in the land (Genesis 43:1). But in spite of this, Jacob still had more than enough. So, famine is not our problem, ignorance of the covenant is the problem. God said in Hosea 4:6, My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge... not for famine or for economic crisis of money failure. Spiritual Growth Guides

In summary, if famine could not stop our covenant fathers, famine cannot stop

us because the economy of our nation has no bearing on our covenant walk with God. I see the covenant prevail for you in your time! May everything that is against you bow to the power of this covenant! However, the only way to prove the reality of new birth is to genuinely repent and accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. Are you born again? If you are not, this is an opportunity to do so. Simply say the following prayer: Lord Jesus, I come to You today. I am a sinner. Forgive me of my sins. Cleanse me with Your precious Blood. Today, I accept You as my Lord and personal Saviour. Thank You, Jesus, for saving me! Now, I know I am born again! Christianity

For further reading, please get my books: Understanding Financial Prosperity, Breaking Financial Hardship, Winning the War against Poverty, Hidden Covenants of Blessing and Covenant Wealth.

I invite you to fellowship with us at the Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, Ota, the covenant home of Winners. We have four services on Sundays, holding at 6:00 a.m., 7:50 a.m., 9:40 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. respectively. I know this teaching has blessed you. Write and share your testimony with me through: Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, Ota, P.M.B. 21688, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria or E-mail: feedback@lfcwww.org, Facebook: David Oyedepo Ministries International, Twitter: @DavidOyedepoMin.

Bishop David O. Oyedepo is a Nigerian Christian author, architect, preacher, and the founder and presiding bishop of the mega church, Living Faith Church Worldwide, also known as Winners' Chapel. Financial Planning & Management

**“ God is the covenantor and we are the covenantee; that is, we are the beneficiary of the deal. ”**

## Family

By: Ihuoma Egbeogu

**In today's fast-changing world, raising children with strong moral values is becoming more difficult, but also more important than ever. Children now grow up in a society shaped by technology, social media, and different cultures and beliefs. Because of this, parents, guardians, schools, and society all have an important role in teaching children good values.**

Values are the principles that guide a child's behaviour and decisions. Qualities like honesty, respect, responsibility, kindness, and integrity help children become good and responsible adults. These values also help build a peaceful and successful society.

However, modern life often focuses more on social media, quick rewards, and material things, causing many of these important values to be ignored.

Parents have one of the greatest responsibilities in teaching values. Children learn more from what they see than from what they are told. Parents who show kindness, discipline, honesty, and respect are more likely to raise children with the same qualities. This is why the home is the first and most important place where children learn values.

Good communication is also very important. Children today face many pressures and are exposed to different ideas at a young age. Parents should create an environment where children feel free to ask questions, share their feelings, and talk about their

## Raising Children With Good Values In A Changing World

experiences. Honest conversations help children understand the difference between right and wrong.

Schools also play an important role. Education should not focus only on academics but also on building good character. Subjects like civic education, moral instruction, and activities that encourage teamwork and responsibility can help children develop positive values. Religious groups and community organisations also help teach

discipline and social responsibility.

Another important duty of parents is guiding children in the use of media and technology. Although technology provides many learning opportunities, it can also expose children to harmful content and unhealthy lifestyles. Parents should monitor how their children use technology and teach them self-control and wise decision-making.

At the same time, parents must understand the realities of modern life and adjust their parenting methods without abandoning important values. Patience, understanding, and flexibility are necessary. Instead of forcing values on children, parents should explain why these values matter so children can truly believe in them.

In conclusion, raising children with good values in a changing world requires effort, consistency, and cooperation between families, schools, and society. Even though the world continues to change, good character will always remain important. By teaching children strong values, we help shape a better future for them and for society as a whole. The work may not be easy, but the reward a generation of responsible, caring, and principled individuals is priceless.



**News**

**Abia Police, NIPR Strengthen Partnership Against Corruption**

*By Chukwuemeka Egejuru*

**T**he Abia State Police Command has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening collaboration with professional bodies as part of efforts to promote transparency, professionalism, and public trust in policing.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Danladi Isa, stated this during a courtesy visit by the Executive Council of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Abia State Chapter, led by its Chairman, Onyinye Ralph-Nwachukwu, fniipr.

CP Isa described partnership with credible professional institutions as essential to modern policing, emphasizing that effective communication remains vital in building public confidence and enhancing security.

He assured the delegation that the Command would continue to support engagements aimed at improving police-community relations and strengthening public trust.

The Police Commissioner also reiterated his administration's zero tolerance for corruption and misconduct within the Command, warning that any officer found guilty of unethical conduct would face strict disciplinary measures and possible prosecution.

According to him, accountability and discipline remain non-negotiable in the operations of the Abia State Police Command.

Earlier, the Chairman of NIPR, Abia State Chapter, Onyinye Ralph-Nwachukwu, commended CP Isa for his calm leadership style, professionalism, and open-door policy.

She noted that the Command under his leadership has continued to build public confidence through improved security coordination and sustained stakeholder engagement, describing the collaboration between the Police and NIPR as timely and strategic.

Ralph-Nwachukwu also praised the Police Public Relations Officer, Maureen Chinaka, for her professionalism, clarity, and composure in communicating the activities of the Command, urging her to sustain the standard.

In a vote of thanks, Sir O.J. Bob Amanze appreciated the Commissioner of Police for the warm reception and renewed commitment to collaboration.

Members of the NIPR delegation included the Vice Chairman, Oluchi Ikechukwu; Secretary, Ori Innocent Onuoha; Assistant Secretary/ICT Officer, Victor Onwuka; Treasurer, Onyinyechi Obi; Financial Secretary, Grace Gbagi; Public Relations Officer, Promise Uzoma Okoro; Internal Auditor, Cletus Nwankwo; Welfare Officer, Amaka Unamba; and Ex-Officio member, O.J. Bob Amanze.

**NDDC Moves To Provide Safety To Work Places**

*From Aligwe Stella, PH*

**T**he Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has handed over a fire truck to its Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) department to strengthen emergency response at its Port Harcourt headquarters and surrounding communities.

The ceremony, held at the NDDC headquarters, is part of a wider plan to equip all NDDC state offices across the Niger Delta with firefighting equipment.

Representing the Managing Director, Dr. Samuel Ogbuku, the Director of Administration and Human Resources, Sir Kelechi Nwelue, said the move was aimed at protecting staff and residents in case of fire outbreaks.

"This fire truck was bought to ensure the safety of the Commission and its environs. We will assist in fighting fire as much as possible, just like Shell and Julius Berger," Nwelue said.

He added that the Commission would extend the provision to all its state offices to reduce hazards and improve response time during emergencies.

The Director of Health, Safety and Environment, Mrs. Chinyere Umeh, thanked the NDDC management for the intervention, saying the truck would significantly boost the department's capacity to respond quickly and enforce safety standards.

"This equipment will enhance our ability to respond promptly to emergencies, promote effective safety practices, and improve environmental protection within the Commission," Umeh said.

She reaffirmed the department's commitment to maintaining safety compliance and raising awareness across the Commission.

The NDDC said the initiative aligns with its broader mandate to safeguard lives and property in the Niger Delta while supporting public safety infrastructure in host



Commissioner of Police, Danladi Isa, fifth from right, during a courtesy visit with members of the executive council of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Abia State Chapter, led by its Chairman, Onyinye Ralph Nwachukwu

**Abia Govt Announces Completion Of Onuimo–Abia Tower Dualization, Others**

*By Amarachi Uzoukwu*

**T**he Abia State Government has announced the completion of three major road projects that would soon be commissioned as part of the ongoing infrastructure renewal programme of Governor Alex Otti's administration.

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

Prince Kanu said that the completed projects were among the 29 roads currently under contract in the state and include the 2.213-kilometre Umuogo-Nsukwe Ring Road, the 5.95-

kilometre dualisation of Onuimo Bridge–Abia Tower Road, and the 11.5-kilometre expansion and reconstruction of the Nunya–Eluama Road.

The Commissioner further revealed that the state government has also recorded progress under its direct labour initiative, noting that five additional roads had recently been completed out of the 51 roads being handled through the arrangement.

According to him, the completed direct labour projects include the maintenance of failed sections of the Osioma Flyover covering 600 metres, rehabilitation of failed portions of the Port Harcourt–Enugu Expressway leading to the

Ugwunagbo Local Government Secretariat spanning 5.2 kilometres, as well as the maintenance and asphalt overlay of the 2.7-kilometre Adealu Road from Osioma Junction to Mopol Base in Aba.

He listed others to include; the construction of the 1.03-kilometre Oberete-Umuopara Road in Obingwa Local Government Area and the 2.66-kilometre road linking Geometric Power to Guineas Junction in Aba.

On environmental management, Prince Kanu announced that the Abia State Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA) has commenced full enforcement of the use of waste bins in all commercial vehicles across the state to promote cleanliness and

proper waste disposal habits among passengers.

He noted that the agency's sustained efforts has contributed significantly to Abia's growing reputation as one of the cleanest states in Nigeria.

The commissioner also disclosed that Governor Otti recently paid a courtesy visit to the new World Bank Country Director for Nigeria, Mr Matthews Verghis, in Abuja, as part of efforts to strengthen existing partnerships between the Abia State Government and the World Bank.

He explained that the visit provided an opportunity for both parties to review ongoing collaborative programmes and explore new areas of partnership capable of accelerating development in the state.

Contributing, the Commissioner for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Mrs Ngozi Felix, said the Executive Council appreciated the governor's engagement with the World Bank Country Director and affirmed that discussions would ensure that the state continues to benefit from World Bank-supported programmes.

She named sectors of continuous partnership with the World Bank to include Energy, education, agriculture, ICT among others, noting that the areas align with the vision of the Governor.

Also speaking, the General Manager of ASEPA, Mazi Ogbonna Okereke, clarified that the agency's enforcement drive was not aimed at revenue generation but at ensuring compliance with environmental laws.

He disclosed that ASEPA is working towards providing public waste bins in areas where they were lacking and urged residents to continue supporting the environmental policies of the Otti led administration.

**Otti Begins Fresh Push To Tackle Flooding Around Obohia, Port Harcourt Roads**

*By Amarachi Uzoukwu*

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State has said that his administration is determined to address the perennial flooding challenges around the Obohia Road area in Aba.

Governor Otti who stated this during an inspection of ongoing road projects in Aba explained that the reconstruction of Obohia Road would include the construction of drainage channels to redirect storm water from the road, Port Harcourt Road and adjoining areas into the Aba River.

According to the governor, the measure is intended to prevent flood water from flowing into a nearby borrow pit that had become an environmental hazard, especially during the rainy season.

"There is a pond (borrow pit) here which constitutes an environmental hazard, particularly when it rains.

"It is for this reason that we designed the road to include channels that will direct storm water from Obohia Road, Port Harcourt Road and other adjoining roads into Aba River," he said.

Governor Otti added that once the project is completed, the borrow pit would no longer be useful adding that the state government would reclaim the land for productive use.

He further urged residents to participate in the ongoing Continuous Voter Registration exercise by the Independent National Electoral Commission to obtain their Permanent Voter Cards.

The governor who also inspected other road projects in Aba, including Umuchichi Road off Okpulo Umuobo Road, Afule Road off Okpulo Umuobo Road, Nigerian Breweries Road and Eche Road, assured traders that the state government will reconstruct the Afor Ule Market to provide a more conducive environment for them as well as improve road infrastructure around the area.

Governor Otti said that the market reconstruction, which would be completed within one year, would be carried out in phases to allow traders to continue their businesses during the exercise.

According to him, the project is aimed at ensuring that every trader has a comfortable place to carry out trading activities.

He also announced that the Afor Ule Road would be reconstructed to make it motorable for commuters and other road users.

Governor Otti frowned at the use of roadsides for trading activities and warned that the state government would no longer tolerate trading on major roads.



**THE SECRETARIAT**  
**SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON ABIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UTURU**  
**Secretariat: Room 18, Political Block, Government House, Umuahia**  
**Tel: +234 704 479 0085, Email: [absuinvestigations2026@gmail.com](mailto:absuinvestigations2026@gmail.com)**

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## CALL FOR SUBMISSION OF MEMORANDA

Following the setting up of a Special Investigations Committee by the Abia State Government to look into recent reports of unethical practices and misconduct in Abia State University (ABSU) by certain staff of the institution, the Committee respectfully invites memoranda from interested individuals, groups, and communities, including but not limited to, officials and staff of the University, students, alumni, parents, and other stakeholder groups.

Such memoranda are to be written in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference as captured below:

1. Investigate recent allegations of extortion and harassment against lecturers and non-teaching staff of the university, identify perpetrators, institutional lapses and procedural gaps that enable such abuses and make appropriate recommendations.
2. Investigate allegations of results manipulation and abuse of processes through electronic and manual means, identify the perpetrators, patterns, and make appropriate recommendations.
3. Investigate allegations of admissions irregularities, especially in professional courses, and identify possible channels of distortion in the standard procedure for university admissions.
4. Investigate allegations of forgery, promotion irregularities and favouritism in staff appointments.
5. Investigate the extent of the implementation of the white paper on the 2024 Full Visitation Panel Report and identify implementation gaps.
6. Investigate and make recommendations on any other matter that may be relevant to the repositioning of ABSU as a citadel of learning and excellence in teaching and research.

Each memorandum is to be typewritten, double-line spaced and set to Times New Roman, font size 12. All submissions should be sealed and addressed to the Committee's Chairman through the Secretary. Memoranda are to be submitted at the Committee's Secretariat, Room 18, Political Block, Government House, Umuahia, no later than 4pm on Friday, May 22, 2026. Submissions can also be made electronically as PDF attachments to [absuinvestigations2026@gmail.com](mailto:absuinvestigations2026@gmail.com) on or before the said date. Materials submitted to the Committee shall be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Submissions can also be made anonymously. Authors are encouraged to indicate how they can be reached by the Committee, if and when the need arises.

  
**Mr Dodoh Okafor,**  
**Committee Secretary**

**News**

**NDDC Empowers 500 Youths In Cross River**

By Aligwe Stella,  
 Port Harcourt

**N**iger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), has empowered 500 young men and women in Cross River State with business training and grants, while distributing 150 minibuses and 200 tricycles to boost transport and small-scale enterprise in the state.

The distribution and graduation ceremony, held at the U.J. Esuene Sports Stadium in Calabar, formed part of the Commission's Skills Acquisition and Capacity Enhancement Programme, aimed at reducing unemployment and stimulating local economic activity.

Representing NDDC Managing Director, Dr. Samuel Ogbuku, Director of Commercial and Industrial Development, Mrs. Lyna Okara, said the initiative went beyond handing out vehicles and cash.

"This empowerment programme is not just about giving out vehicles and grants; it is about creating opportunities, restoring hope and enabling the people to build better futures for themselves and their families," Okara said.

The 500 beneficiaries underwent training in financial prudence and business management before receiving take-off grants to start or expand small businesses.

Executive Director,

Projects, Dr. Victor Antai, represented by the NDDC Cross River State Director, Dr. Daniel Ajunwa, said the commission had redeemed its promise to the people. He urged beneficiaries to use the opportunity to improve their livelihoods and support others in their communities.

Senator Asuquo Ekpenyong, representing Cross River South, said he remained committed to eradicating poverty in his constituency through job creation and basic amenities. He advised beneficiaries to maintain the vehicles and use the training effectively to sustain the scheme.

"We will continue to create opportunities that take our people off the streets and into productive ventures," Ekpenyong said.

Stakeholders praised the intervention as timely. Hon. Edet Bassey described it as "timely and impactful" and urged the NDDC to expand the programme.

Beneficiaries expressed gratitude. Mr. Solomon Olatunji, speaking for the 500 trainees, pledged to make judicious use of the grants. Tricycle recipient, Essien Ufiok, said the support would improve his livelihood, while minibus beneficiary, Arit Akpo, thanked President Tinubu, the NDDC, and Senator Ekpenyong for the gesture.

The NDDC said it had executed several projects in Cross River aimed at cutting unemployment, alleviating poverty, and boosting local commerce.



Some empowerment items distributed by the NDDC to over 500 young men and women in Cross River State, held at the U.J. Esuene Sports Stadium in Calabar.

**Budget Foundation Ranks Abia Among Nigeria's Best-Run States**

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

**G**overnor Alex Otti of Abia State has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to transparency, accountability and the prudent management of the state's resources.

The governor stated this, recently, in his office at Nvosi, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area, when he received a delegation from BudgIT Foundation Team, led by its Global Director, Oluseun Onigbinde.

The BudgIT team visited the governor following the release of the organisation's 2025 State of States report, in which Abia State emerged fourth overall in Nigeria, rising from its initial 17th position within two years of the Otti-led administration.

The governor noted that transparency remains "non-negotiable" in his administration and constitutes the foundation

of governance in the state.

He said that his administration had deliberately prioritised accountability and ethical conduct in public service, pointing out that officials found wanting in matters relating to transparency were sanctioned.

"The issue about transparency is non-negotiable, and we have had cause to part with people because of the issue of transparency, because that's the foundation.

"And I've always said that people watch you. They listen to you. But most times they do what you do, not what you say.

"If you lead by example, even without saying anything, people will key in. And when they are not doing the right thing, they will be panicking on their own, even before they are found.

"So it's not even a matter to discuss. It is taken for granted that everybody working here has to be

transparent", Governor Otti said.

The governor stressed that while fiscal sustainability and internally generated revenue remained important, his administration was more focused on improving the quality of life of residents through investments in education, healthcare and infrastructure.

He explained that his administration met a near-collapse of public infrastructure upon assumption of office in 2023, including dysfunctional healthcare facilities, poor environmental conditions and declining school enrolment.

Governor Otti disclosed that his administration introduced free and compulsory basic education after discovering that school fees had become a major barrier preventing children from attending school.

According to him, school enrolment doubled shortly after the policy was

introduced, leading the government to embark on massive teacher recruitment to bridge manpower gaps in public schools.

The Governor also highlighted ongoing reforms in the health sector, revealing that the state met 948 dysfunctional primary healthcare centres on assumption of office and had since begun rebuilding the healthcare system, including restoring accreditation for the Abia State University Teaching Hospital Aba.

Governor Otti said the administration chose not to aggressively pursue taxation in its early days in office, but instead focused on rebuilding infrastructure and restoring public confidence.

He welcomed the proposed partnership with BudgIT Foundation, which is expected to focus on fiscal sustainability, fiscal transparency and accountability.

**Eno Reassures Of Accessible, Quality Healthcare, As Ikot Ekpene Model Health Centre Takes Off**

From Lovina Emole, Uyo

**A**kwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno, has reiterated his commitments in providing accessible and quality healthcare to people across the state.

This was even as he commissioned a Model Primary Health Centre in Mbiaso, Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of the state.

Speaking at the ceremony, the governor represented by the Commissioner for Education, Prof. Ubong Umo Essien, described the project as a significant milestone in his state's drive toward improved healthcare and human capital development.

Highlighting the

historical role of Methodist Church Nigeria in healthcare development, Prof. Essien recalled that the church established the first health post in Ikot Ekpene in 1905, which later became the general hospital.

He explained that the newly commissioned health facility, built 120 years after the establishment of the first health post, was designed to provide modern primary healthcare services comparable to those available at the General Hospital in Ikot Ekpene.

Prof. Essien stated that the centre, strategically located in Mbiaso – a name which translates to "health workers" or "doctors" in Ibibio – is expected to serve over 25 villages across Ikot Ekpene and Obot Akara Local Government Areas.

"What we have here can take care of everything from general immunization to male circumcision, from malaria to pneumonia, and from pregnancy to all kinds of emergency," he noted, disclosing that qualified doctors and nurses had already been deployed to the facility, while an ambulance donated by the constituency's house member, would strengthen emergency healthcare response.

In his remarks, the Chairman of Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area, Hon. Aniefiok Nkom, expressed appreciation to the governor for citing the health facility in Mbiaso and thanked the Methodist Church for graciously donating the land for the project.

The council chairman

who was accompanied by the wife, Mrs. Affiong Nkom, also commended the Member, representing Ikot Ekpene/Obot Akara State Constituency in the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly, Hon. Jerry Otu, for providing an ambulance to support operations at the health centre.

Hon. Nkom further appreciated traditional rulers, community leaders, stakeholders and residents for their co-operation and support during the execution of the project.

He lauded the governor for other ongoing development initiatives in Ikot Ekpene, including the international market project, road infrastructure and the proposed trailer park, assuring the governor of the continued support of the

people.

Providing an overview of the facility, the Commissioner for Health, Dr. Ekem John, applauded Governor Eno for, "walking the talk", in healthcare delivery through impactful projects across the state.

The commissioner urged residents to take full advantage of the modern healthcare services provided at the facility and appealed to expectant mothers to desist from patronizing unregulated traditional birth attendants due to the associated health risks.

He further encouraged local government authorities and community leaders to intensify awareness on the State Health Insurance Scheme to enable more residents access affordable healthcare services.

Also speaking, the Paramount Ruler of Ikot Ekpene, Okuku Udo Ukut, and the Village Head of Mbiaso Nto Obodom, Etteidung Daniel Johnson Umo Essien, conveyed the gratitude of the people to the State Government for responding to the healthcare needs of the community.

In separate goodwill messages, stakeholders, including the political leader of Ikot Ekpene, Senator Emmanuel Ibo Essien; Commissioner for Environment, Rt. Hon. Nsikak Ekong; Chairman of Ibom Power Company, Mr. Etido Inyang; and the House of Assembly Member for Ikot Ekpene/Obot Akara State Constituency, Hon. Otu, commended Governor Eno for translating the ARISE Agenda into tangible projects that directly impact the lives of the people.

## Entertainment

# "I Started on #100k":

R O S I T O  
 " " r E A e O

"The long-time host of Nigeria's Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, Frank Edoho, has opened up about his modest starting salary on the popular TV show while still projecting an image of wealth and success on air.

Speaking at a seminar in a video posted on his Instagram page on recently Edoho recounted how he hosted the show while maintaining a polished and affluent image. On "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?", the first two years of my salary per month was a hundred and something thousand naira. But I had to wear a suit as if I owned all the money," he recounted.

He explained that his pay improved significantly after MTN came on board as a sponsor. Edoho recounted that it was then he decided to negotiate directly with the production company's owner. "When MTN came on, I just said, let me just give a figure to my boss... He said, 'How much are you going to be paying?'"

While he did not disclose the figure, Edoho said the pay was significant and that he did not expect his boss to agree, but the

response was positive."

"Once I mentioned the figure, okay, we'll give you three months' back pay," Edoho recounted, adding that he immediately accepted the deal." Edoho said he decided to negotiate directly with the production company's owner.

"When MTN came on, I just said, let me just give a figure to my boss... He said, 'How much are you going to be paying?' While he did not disclose the figure, Edoho said the pay was significant and that he did not expect his boss to agree, but the response was positive.

"Once I mentioned the figure, okay, we'll give you three months' back pay," Edoho recounted, adding that he immediately accepted the deal.

"The rewards came in. I was hosting events all over the place. I was flying and doing all kinds of things."

He also reflected on the personal challenges he faced before success.

"Although my life had some ups and downs and everything, but like they said, you know, it's just the same microcosm of



you facing trouble in your business... learn how to compartmentalise and just push it aside, concentrate your eyes on the prize." The revelation has generated widespread reactions online, with many Nigerians contrasting the value of over ₦100,000 monthly in the mid-2000s with today's economic realities marked by naira devaluation and high inflation.

When the show launched, ₦100,000 converted to roughly \$700 to \$800 at an exchange rate of about ₦130 to \$1 and had stronger purchasing power."

Others praised Edoho's "fake it till you make it" mindset and his negotiation skills. Edoho hosted the Nigerian version of the global franchise for over 13 years and remains one of the country's most respected television personalities.

## From Lagos To Umuahia: How Abia State Became Home In One Year Of Service

**T**his is more than the end of my service year. It is a testimony of grace, growth, and the power of saying "yes" to where God leads. When I first saw Abia State, also camp Date: 11th June, 2025 on my call-up letter, I paused and asked myself, "Can I cope here? Is this God's plan for me?" Fear almost made me consider relocation, but 70% of the people I consulted reminded me that this was the Lord's doing. Today, I can boldly say: What God cannot do does not exist. Serving in Abia State was not only His will for me, but also a privilege to experience the first state of the federation (Gods Owns State).

I return praises to God Almighty for His protection, guidance, and provision throughout the service year, my Father and Keeper in a supposed strange land. I am wiser now than when I left "Center of Excellence" for "God's Own State". To Him alone be all the glory!

My sincere gratitude goes to the Federal Government of Nigeria, under the leadership of HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT ASIWAJU BOLA AHMED TINUBU, GCFR, for sustaining the NYSC scheme. To the government and people of Abia State, I say thank you, especially appreciate HIS EXCELLENCY, GOVERNOR DR. ALEX CHIOMA OTTI, for ensuring security and a conducive environment for corps members. I also appreciate the Director General of NYSC, BRIGADIER GENERAL OLAKUNLE OLUSEYE NAFIU, for his commitment to corps members' welfare.

Checkpoints from Lagos to Umuahia were professional and reassuring. I like to also commend the drivers who took us to Igbere, Bende LGA Abia State (they drove day and night to ensure our safe and timely arrival to Orientation camp).

Likewise, my appreciation goes to the former and new NYSC State Coordinators, Abia State, (BARR. (MRS.) GLADYS ADAMA, and MR. TANIMU YUNUSE) respectively for their dedication to corps members' welfare. Your work has not gone unnoticed.

To my Place of Primary Assignment, Standard International Secondary School, (DR. SMART) Umuahia, I deeply appreciated the management and staff for the quality time together, to my students whom I was opportune to impart with knowledge in Business Studies from JSS1 to JSS3 and Marketing from SSS1 to SSS3, it was such a beautiful and glorious experience. Likewise, it gladdened my heart that I who previously was under tutelage now become a counsellor, advising and encouraging students to be more focus, determined, set goals and be accountable, to which end I rewarded students who passed my subject with ₦5,000, to encourage excellence.

To management and staff of Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, publishers of the National Ambassador, I am deeply grateful, my profound appreciation goes to the General Manager, HON. JONES NNANNA IKE; the Editor, PST. CHUKWUEMEKA EGEJURU, anipr; and the Director of Administration, MR. NWACHUKWU DANDY O., thank you for the opportunity to learn, contribute, and grow in the media professional.

My CDS group "Financial Inclusion" it is so nice being among the team that imparted host community.

To my family, Mr. and Mrs. AKINRUJOMU, also my Pastor M/S/E (Dr.) M.O. OSEYEMI (CCC ONA TYE CATHEDRAL), Pastor Dr. Mr. & Mrs. AKANDE (LOGEM), Pastor (Dr.) BELLO (RCCG), Pastor Dr. Mr. & Mrs. ADEWUSI (CAC) thank you for your

prayers and unwavering support. To my everything, MUSTAPHA AJUMO ADUKE, thank you for standing with me. To Mr. AKINYEMI OLUSEGUN (HOS/HRM&A), Alimosho LGA, Lagos State, and Mrs. ODULESI, the woman of capacity in Abeokuta, Ogun State, thank you for the mentorship and encouragement, Mr. & Mrs. KETIKU, Mr. & Mrs. AYOADE, Mrs. MOJISOLA ABE DEMURIN, Mr. & Mrs. ROLAND, these people are always there for me, they are like my father and mother, To HON. (DR.) BABATUNDE OYETOLA DIYA, Executive Chairman of Odogbolu LGA, thank you for being a man who keeps his word and for your support to me and the people of Ososa.

I also initiated the Academy Olympiad Project, Academy Olympiad.

What is it? Academy Olympiad: it is an academic competition and mentorship program I designed for secondary school students in Abia State during my NYSC service. The idea was to test and reward excellence in core subjects like Mathematics, and English, while also building soft skills like critical thinking and public speaking.

**Purpose:**

1. Spark healthy competition among students from JSS1 to SSS3 to make learning more engaging in the state.
2. Identify and reward talent early, so students feel seen and motivated.
3. Bridge the gap between classroom theory and real-world application through workshops and mentorship sessions.
4. Promote accountability and excellence in both students and teachers.

**Benefits:**

To Students:

- Boosts confidence and academic performance through recognition and rewards.
- Encourages a culture of studying beyond passing exams.
- Exposes them to mentorship and career guidance early.

To the State:

- Raises the overall academic standard in Abia State schools.
- Creates a talent pool for future competitions at state and national levels.
- Supports the government's education agenda by complementing classroom teaching.

To the Community:

- Engages parents and local leaders in supporting education.
- Builds a reputation for the community as one that values learning and excellence.
- Gives students a productive alternative to idleness and social vices.

Which I had hoped would receive approval from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, but took a different turn, the experience taught me resilience and the value of perseverance.

This service year taught me more than I expected. I came to Abia State uncertain, but I am leaving with confidence, experience, and a heart full of gratitude. Abia State gave me more than service. It gave me purpose, relationships, and a deeper understanding of Nigeria's diversity.

Once again, I, Akinrujomu Gideon Oluwatobi, appreciate every positive impact I received in Abia State. Thank you for the love, care, value, feeding, mentorship, and opportunities. I will carry the lessons and memories with me for life.

Tomorrow will be greater:

Akinrujomu Gideon Oluwatobi  
 Corps Member, AB/25A/1345  
 08102892026, 08127944776





## Creative Writers Hangout

# Dear Step-mother (4)

The following day Sandra hit the streets with a basket of plantain chips on her head, calling on passersby to come and patronize her. The previous day was excellent, she sold all the chips and her account was balanced. Chioma grinned from ear to ear as she collected the money from Sandra.

"I hope you do smile to your customers?" Chioma asked after counting the money.

Sandra thought she wanted to give her tips on customer relations, "Yes, I do smile when I sell to them."

"That's good," Chioma said as she put the money into her bra. "Did men patronize you at all?"

What is her business with who bought the chips? Sandra thought but urged herself to remain calm. "Yes", she replied, "a lot of men patronized me."

"Did you say a lot of men?"

"Yes"

"Hope you smiled when selling to them?"

"Mummy", Sandra started, "Sorry madam," she corrected herself when she remembered that Chioma said she should not call her mummy. "What really is your point. If you are asking to know if your prediction that I will get married is coming to reality, let me burst your bubble, I will remain a virgin till I get married." Sandra stood up and walked to her room.

"You are walking out on me", Chioma shouted, "very soon you will get pregnant."

Sandra fell asleep as soon as she took her bath and dinner of burnt rice.

She was determined to sell all her plantain chips and go home earlier than the previous day. It started well as she made sells very fast.

A young man stopped her and gave her one thousand naira to buy only one pack of two hundred naira. Sandra checked the money in her purse, they were mostly one thousand naira notes.

Sandra left her basket in the care of a woman in a shop and ran around to get change for the man. Before long she returned, gave the man his change, thanked the woman and continued with her hawking.

When she got to the bus stop, she started selling from bus to bus. While she was selling to some passengers inside an ITC bus, she noticed a woman in an Abia Line bus looking at her with interest. She thought the woman wanted to buy from her, so she attended to the passengers in the ITC bus as fast as she could and ran to the Abia Line bus, "Mummy, good morning, it's only two hundred naira each, how many should I give you?" Sandra felt she had seen the woman before, but, she did not notice the man beside the woman until the man

called her name.

"Sandra Amadi, are you not supposed to be in school?"

Sandra did not need to look at his face. His voice was very familiar. She quickly took to her heels. The man came down and called her not to run, but Sandra was too embarrassed to see her Principal at Wellington Junior Secondary School. How could she explain to him that her schooling was over. She was one of the brightest students at the school, but had been turned into a plantain chips hawker.

As she ran as fast as she could, she reminded herself 'it is better for the king to be killed than to be disgraced.'

She knew her worth and where she belonged not hawking. After running for several minutes, meandering the streets to evade the principal in case he

just twelve."

"I'm going to buy all."

"Thanks sir, the total amount is two thousand four hundred naira only."

"Yes, I know." The man said as he stood up. "Has anybody told you that you are beautiful today?"

"Sir, I thought you wanted to buy plantain chips?" Sandra asked, trying very hard to remain respectful.

"Stop this pretense fine girl. Everyone knows that you hawkers sell your wares and your body."

"I sell plantain chips alone." Sandra said angrily as she lifted her basket to her head, "My body is not for sale."

The man laughed and sat down again. "You are playing hard to get. But I will get you."

Sandra walked away very angry with herself as the joy of selling all her



was pursuing her. She stopped in front of a closed shop, put down her basket, sat down and wept bitterly for herself.

People nearby noticed her and started converging to ask her what happened.

She did not reply. She only wiped her eyes, got up and carried her basket. As she walked past the group of sympathizers, Sandra could not help but smiled when one of the men said, "this girl is possessed, that is how they behave."

As soon as she walked into the next street, a man that is old enough to be her father sitting in front of a bungalow with his sewing machine in front of him called her.

"How much is your plantain chips, beautiful girl?"

"Sir, it's two hundred naira each."

"How many are remaining?"

Excited that the man was going to buy all, Sandra quickly counted. "Sir,

plantain chips was replaced with disappointment. She was so angry that she decided to go home.

When she got home she lied to Chioma that she was having running stomach.

All hell was let lose when Chioma checked the remaining plantain chips and noticed that about ten packs were not accounted for. She charged into Sandra's room and flogged her mercilessly.

After she had cried for a while she fell asleep. When she woke up she started thinking deeply what must have happened to ten packs of the plantain chips. She remembered how the woman she asked to look after her basket when she went to look for change was smiling when she came back. She felt so bad that a woman that she trusted as a mother could stoop so low as to steal from her.

Chioma did not give her anything to eat for the rest of the day. As Sandra could not sleep because of the rumble of hunger in her stomach, she remembered Uche.

What has happened to Uche since almost a year he jumped from Sandra's window? Find out in our next publication.

## AUTHOR of the WEEK



### Tsitsi Dangarembga

Tsitsi Dangarembga is a renowned Zimbabwean novelist, filmmaker, and cultural activist whose work has earned international recognition for its bold exploration of identity, gender, and postcolonial society. Born on February 4, 1959, in Mutoko, Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia), she spent part of her childhood in England before returning to her home country. This early exposure to different cultures deeply influenced her worldview and later writing. Dangarembga pursued higher education in Zimbabwe and later studied film in Germany, shaping her dual career in literature and cinema.

Dangarembga rose to prominence with her groundbreaking debut novel, *Nervous Conditions* (1988), which became the first book published in English by a Black Zimbabwean woman. The novel, set in colonial Rhodesia, tells the story of a young girl navigating the challenges of education, family expectations, and gender inequality. It received widespread acclaim for its powerful narrative voice and was later included in the BBC's list of the 100 most influential novels. Through this work, Dangarembga established herself as a leading voice in African literature.

Throughout her career, Dangarembga has received numerous awards and honors for her work, including the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 2021. She is also known for her activism, particularly her outspoken stance on social justice and political reform in Zimbabwe, which has at times led to her arrest. Despite challenges, Tsitsi Dangarembga remains an influential figure whose work continues to inspire readers and creators around the world.

Following the success of her debut, she continued the story with *The Book of Not* (2006) and *This Mournable Body* (2018), forming a trilogy

#### CITATIONS INSPIRANTES

*"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."*

- Frederick Douglass, American writer.



## ABIA STATE GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA MINISTRY OF HOUSING

### INVITATION TO TENDER FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS IN A NEW RESIDENTIAL LAYOUT IN UMUAHIA.

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In line with the vision of the Abia State Government to transform Umuahia into a modern city and provide structured, affordable housing for its citizens, the Ministry of Housing hereby invites reputable, competent, and experienced Companies to tender for the construction of buildings in a new residential layout within Umuahia Town.

#### 2.0 SCOPE OF WORKS

The project involves the construction of different building types within the estate viz:

- 1) Detached houses (2 floors)
- 2) Semi-detached houses (2 floors)
- 3) Blocks of 2-bedroom flats (3 floors)
- 4) Blocks of 3-bedroom flats (3 and 4 floors respectively).

#### 3.0 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Interested companies are required to submit the following verifiable documents:

**Evidence of Incorporation:** Certificate of Incorporation with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) including Forms CAC 1.1 or CAC2 and CAC7.

**Tax Clearance:** Evidence of Company's Income Tax Clearance Certificate for the last three (3) years.

**Financial Capability:** Bank reference letter from a reputable commercial bank and Audited Accounts for the last three years.

**Technical Competence:** Company profile including CVs of key professional staff (ARCON, COREN, CORBON, TOPREC etc.) and list of equipment owned or leased.

**Experience:** Verifiable evidence of at least three (3) similar projects executed in the last five years, including award letters and completion certificates.

**State Registration:** Certificate of Registration with the Abia State Procurement Bureau as a contractor.

**Evidence of Abia State Identification Number (ABSSIN)**

**Compliance Certificates:** Valid PENCOM, ITF, and NSITF compliance certificates.

**Sworn Affidavit:** Disclosing any interest of Ministry officials and confirming the authenticity of all submitted information.

#### 4.0 COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS

Interested bidding firms are to collect the Standard Bidding Document (SBD) from the Ministry of Housing, State Secretariat, Ogurube Layout, Umuahia.

Collection requires the presentation of a receipt for a non-refundable tender fee for each building type as specified by the Ministry, payable into the Abia State Government Single Treasury Account.

#### 5.0 SUBMISSION OF BIDS

Prospective bidders must submit two (2) separate sealed envelopes—one marked "Technical Bid" and the other "Financial Bid". Both envelopes must be placed in a larger, single envelope clearly labeled with the project title and the bidder's name.

Submissions should be addressed to:

**The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Housing,  
Block A, State Secretariat, Ogurube Layout, Umuahia, Abia State.**

#### 6.0 CLOSING DATE AND OPENING.

The deadline for submission is 1:00 PM on Wednesday June 24, 2026 (6 weeks from this publication). Bids will be opened immediately after the deadline in the Ministry's Conference Room. Bidders or their representatives are invited to attend.

#### 7.0 IMPORTANT NOTES

Late submissions will be returned unopened. The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest bid and reserves the right to annul the process without liability.

Signed:  
**Tpl. Ukeje Uche Ukpabi**  
 Permanent Secretary,  
 Abia State Ministry of Housing

# Sporting Ambassador



## Abia Referees 2026 AGM: Matters Arising

By Chinedu Kelechi



**T**he Abia State Football Referees Council recently held its 2026 Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Tithe House along MCC Road, Aba, with stakeholders calling for reforms, discipline, and renewed commitment to the development of football officiating across the state.

The meeting, which drew referees and football officials from across Abia State, served as a platform to review the council's activities, assess progress made in refereeing development, and set new targets for strengthening football officiating standards.

Addressing members, the State Chairman of the Football Referees Council, Elder Ogunta Matador, highlighted major challenges facing the council, including lack of motivation, poor creativity and commitment among society leaders, declining enrollment of Referees-in-Training (RIT), and divided interests among trainees.

He stressed the need for members to remain focused and committed to the profession, noting that the council plans to organize mock physical fitness exercises and mock examinations for referees-in-training to better prepare them for national assessments.

Matador also outlined key projects the council hopes to achieve, including the creation of new referee societies to expand council coverage across the state, reduce the activities of unqualified "whistle men," and curb indiscipline within the system.

He further disclosed plans to introduce referee welfare packages beginning next year, while ensuring full participation in annual examinations by presenting only committed, dedicated, and passionate candidates through a strict screening process.

According to him, the AGM has successfully rotated across the three major footballing zones of Umuahia, Isiala Ngwa, and Aba, ensuring wider participation and inclusiveness.

"Referees remain critical stakeholders in football development. Professionalism, integrity, and continuous learning must remain the guiding principles of every official," Matador said.

He urged members to uphold the ethics of the profession, embrace modern trends in football officiating, and foster stronger cooperation among themselves.

He also encouraged younger referees to learn from the experience of senior colleagues in order to sustain excellence and preserve the credibility of the profession.

Speaking on behalf of the National President of the Nigeria Football Referees Association (NFRA), Alhaji Sani Zubairo, the National Welfare Officer of NFRA, Barrister Innocent Amuzie, emphasized the importance of discipline, regular training, and commitment to duty among referees.

Amuzie said the national body remains committed to capacity building through seminars, workshops, and practical officiating sessions aimed at improving referees' performance both on and off the pitch.

He noted that football refereeing demands not only physical fitness but also mental alertness, sound judgment, and high moral standards.

"Referees must see themselves as ambassadors of fairness and justice in the game because the integrity of football largely depends on the credibility of match officials," he said.

Also speaking at the event, Mrs. Edith Nwankire, Nigeria's premier female referee, Sports Chairman of Ogonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba, (Rtd) and a FIFA/CAF Sports Commissioner, encouraged more women to pursue careers in sports, especially football officiating.

She urged female athletes and aspiring referees not to be discouraged by societal stereotypes, stressing that talent and determination should remain their driving force.

"As long as you are talented and have the dream, you should continue to pursue that dream because it is only there you will find satisfaction," she said.

Nwankire dismissed the belief that women in sports are less attractive or unable to maintain successful marriages and family lives.

"I got married and gave birth to my four children, who are now graduates. Being a sportsperson or a football referee did not stop me from marriage or childbirth. In fact, sports keep you physically and mentally fit for anything," she added.

The AGM was attended by top officials of the Football Referees Council at both state and national levels, including the State Secretary, Mr. Iheanacho

Chukwuemeka; Referee Training Coordinator, Mr. C.C. Iheamadu; Aba North FRS Chairman, High Chief Nkoro Ogbonna; Obingwa FRS Chairman, Elder Chinyere Matthew; FIFA/CAF Match Commissioner and Instructor, Chief Eke Onyeoforo; and the State Welfare Officer, Dame Priscilla Eneogwe, among others.

The gathering ended with renewed commitments from members to strengthen professionalism, improve referee welfare, and promote excellence in football officiating across Abia State. Group photographs were also taken.



Chairman of the Abia State Football Referees Council, Elder Matador Ogunta

## Abia Sports Development: Gov. Otti Inaugurates 35 Sports Associations

By Joseph Jacob



Abia State Deputy Governor, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu, during the inauguration

In a bold move to ensure that no sport is left behind in Abia State's drive for sports excellence, Governor Alex Otti has officially inaugurated members of the 35 Sports Associations across the state.

The brief but significant ceremony took place at the Kanu Nwankwo Indoor Sports Hall within the Umuahia Township Stadium, where stakeholders in the sports sector gathered to

witness what many described as another major step in repositioning Abia as a leading force in Nigerian sports development.

Represented by the Deputy Governor, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu, Governor Otti charged the newly inaugurated association members to see their appointments not as mere titles, but as a serious call to service. He emphasized the crucial role sports play in youth empowerment, talent discovery, and social development, urging them to use their various platforms to drive positive change.

“Your appointment,” the governor stated, “is a call to service and a recognition of your capacity to contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of sports in Abia State. The expectation is high, and so too is our confidence in your ability to deliver.”

He stressed that the present administration remains committed to creating opportunities for young people through sports, adding that every sporting discipline must be given equal attention and support to thrive.

Earlier in his address, the Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Sir Obilor Nwadike Ananaba, reminded the appointees that their responsibilities go beyond administration—they are now custodians of their respective sports and must work diligently to discover, nurture, and develop talents capable of becoming

national and international champions.

According to him, sports development requires dedication, accountability, and vision.

“You are the custodians of your sport,” he said. “Ensure that every naira spent brings a smile to the face and a medal to the neck of your athlete.”

He noted that Governor Otti's administration is determined to restore Abia's pride in sports and expects the associations to align with that vision by delivering measurable results.

Also speaking at the event, the Director of Sports, Comrade Obioma George, highlighted Abia State's remarkable achievements in both national and international sporting competitions. He described the inauguration as another milestone in Governor Otti's deliberate effort to make Abia a reference point for sports excellence across Nigeria.

George praised the administration's consistent investment in sports infrastructure, athlete welfare, and event hosting, noting that the state is gradually reclaiming its place among Nigeria's sporting giants.

The Zonal Coordinator of the National Sports Commission, Mr. Bernard Ezeama also commended the state government for its outstanding commitment to sports development. He revealed that within just the first four months of the year, Abia State had successfully hosted several major national sporting events—a feat he described as exceptional.

He jokingly remarked that he

was already considering relocating to Abia because of the non-stop sporting activities taking place across the state.

“In terms of sports development, Abia is head and shoulders above many states in Nigeria,” he said. “This is a clear reflection of the outstanding performance of Governor Alex Otti. The newly inaugurated associations must support this sports-friendly government and ensure that Abia remains number one—not just nominally, but in practical sports development.”

Delivering the vote of thanks, Olympian Chika Chukwumereje charged the newly appointed members to approach their assignments with seriousness and passion, reminding them that the talents they help discover today could become tomorrow's global stars.

He noted that beyond medals and trophies, sports have the power to transform lives and lift families out of poverty.

“You may be discovering the next champion whose success will change the story of an entire family,” he said.

Among those inaugurated was the General Manager of the Abia State Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Comrade Jones Nnanna Ike, who was appointed to serve in the Athletics Association.

The inauguration marks yet another strong statement of intent from the Otti administration—one that sees sports not merely as competition, but as a powerful tool for youth development, economic growth, and state pride.



Cross-section of the inaugurated Board Chairmen

### SUDOKU

Puzzle By: Prince Blessing Lazarus

	8			3		4		
				5				1
					4	5	8	
	5	7			2			9
9								4
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All you have to do is fill the grid in such way that every 3X3 box and row and column, contains the numbers 1-9.