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NATIONAL Ambassador

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“Uplift the people, project the nation”

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Reactions As FG Moves To Review N70,000 Minimum Wage

By Ebere Tasie

The Federal Government recently revealed plans to review the N70,000 minimum wage as hardship bites harder, in a public opinion sampled in the city of Umuahia in Abia state sparked different reactions among workers, traders and

economic analyst.

The current minimum wage debate comes as organized labour argues that the wage could no longer sustain workers because of rising inflation and worsening economic hardship.

Many workers who spoke on the issue described the present wage as unrealistic in

today's economy and decried the high cost of living and inflation in the country.

A public servant in Umuahia who pleaded for anonymity, said that house rent and electricity bill alone take almost all her salary, adding that feeding this period is becoming impossible.

She lamented that even with the decision of changing her children from a private school to government owned school, that things are still not easy for her as a widow and mother of two children.

she said that the review of the minimum wage and its adjustment to

reasonable amount will be a welcome development.

Another worker in the state, who gave his name as Mr. Iyke, noted that the wage review is overly due, stating that when the current minimum wage was approved that prices of goods were high but now have doubled.

A civil servant in the

federal establishment named Obasi Chukwuka, stated that the review and increase of the minimum wage is meaningless, stating that such would attract more increase in the already enormous cost of house rent. He added that the proper thing for the government to do is to stabilize the economy

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Labour Party Backs Senate Approval Of State Police Bill

From Sophina Ovuike, Abuja

The Labour Party has welcomed the Senate's approval of the State Police Bill, describing it as a significant step towards strengthening Nigeria's internal security architecture and improving law enforcement across the country.

In a statement issued recently by its National Publicity Secretary, Ken Eluma Asogwa, the party commended the National Assembly, particularly the Senate, for what it described as a patriotic and timely decision to pass the bill transmitted by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The party noted that the demand for state policing has gained widespread support over the years as Nigerians seek a more responsive and community-based security system capable of addressing the country's growing security challenges.

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L-R: Abia State Deputy Gov, Ikehukwu Emetu, his wife, Mrs. Adaeze Emetu and Abia State Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Creative Economy, Matthew Ekwuribe, during the 2026 CANVAS Arts and Culture Day, organized by the Abia State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy in collaboration with the House of Crystal Empire, to commemorate the 2026 World Arts Day, at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia, recently.

Abia North Stakeholders Back Otti for Second Term

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

A coalition of stakeholders from Abia North Senatorial District has endorsed Governor Alex Otti for a second term in office, citing what it described as his transformative leadership and impressive performance across critical sectors of governance.

The endorsement was announced at the inaugural meeting of the Alliance for Good Governance in Abia State, held recently at the residence of businessman and community leader, Chief Ebueme Ezikpe, in Abiriba, Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State.

Addressing journalists after the meeting, the group's spokesman and

former Secretary to the Abia State Government, Prof. Mkpa Agu Mkpa, said the governor had demonstrated exceptional leadership since assuming office and deserved another mandate in 2027.

He explained that the alliance was established to promote and sustain good governance in Abia, describing the Otti administration as a model worthy of continuity.

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EDITORIAL:

State Police: A Reform Worth Protecting

News

Reactions As FG Moves To Review N70,000 Minimum Wage

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A tricycle operator, who gave his name as Chima, maintained that the high cost of living is becoming unbearable stating that inflation of goods and services hit harder on the civil servants as their wages remain the same for a long period of time unlike traders and skilled workers that increase the price of their goods and services as a result of inflation

A business man named

Okechukwu Silvanus, stated "We understand workers are suffering and government should do well to increase their salary to help them solve many problems facing man today. Businesses are suffering too, electricity bills and fuel costs are killing small business."

Silvanus, however, called on the government to ensure constant power supply with affordable bills in the country, stressing that it would help to improve the economy.

Abia North Stakeholders Back Otti for Second Term

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According to Prof. Mkpa, the group consists of respected opinion leaders, professionals and community stakeholders who are not politicians and have no interest in seeking political appointments or government patronage.

He noted that participants attended the meeting from the five local government areas that make up Abia North Senatorial District—Bende, Ohafia, Arochuku, Isuikwuato and Umunneochi.

"Our members are stakeholders and opinion leaders who are not seeking anything from government. We came together because we believe the good governance being championed by Governor Alex Otti should be sustained for the benefit of Abians," he said.

Prof. Mkpa commended the administration's achievements in education, road infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, security, transportation and public sector reforms, describing the governor's performance as unprecedented in the state's history.

He said participants unanimously agreed that Governor Otti's developmental projects had become his strongest campaign, adding that the

administration's achievements had earned widespread public acceptance.

The former SSG disclosed that the alliance resolved to mobilise eligible voters across the district to obtain their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) ahead of the 2027 general elections and support candidates who would work with the governor to deepen development in the state.

He added that members also pledged to ensure that the governance template introduced by the current administration would be preserved beyond Governor Otti's tenure.

Also speaking, businessman and proprietor of Ahudiyannem Queens Football Club and Ahudiyannem FC, Dr. Robert Onyeani, attributed his continued investments in Abia North to the improved road infrastructure provided by the state government.

He said the reconstruction of roads connecting Umuahia to Arochuku had encouraged him to establish major investments in Abiriba, including his football clubs and hospitality business.

Labour Party Backs Senate

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According to the statement, the proposed legislation represents a major move toward decentralising policing and enhancing security at the grassroots.

While acknowledging concerns over the possible misuse of state police by governors, the Labour Party maintained that such fears should not derail efforts to reform the nation's security framework.

It pointed to accountability and oversight mechanisms contained in Section 17 of the proposed constitutional amendment, expressing

confidence that the safeguards would help prevent abuse if faithfully implemented.

The party argued that although no policing system is perfect, the shortcomings of the current centralised structure make the establishment of state police both necessary and timely.

It stressed that innovative security reforms are essential to effectively tackle rising insecurity and improve the protection of lives and property across the federation.

Otti Hails National Leadership of Broadcasters

By Okereke Kate and Charles Ogbonnaya

The Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has commended the leadership of the Society of Nigerian Broadcasters (SNB) for its commitment in promoting professionalism and ethical standards in the broadcasting profession.

Gov Otti said the Society of Nigerian Broadcasters under the watch of Professor Umar Pate as the National President, has not only strengthened the voice of broadcasters across the nation but has also inspired a new generation of media practitioners to see broadcasting as a powerful instrument for national development, social cohesion, and democratic consolidation.

Delivering his speech at the 2026 Annual Conference of Society of Nigerian Broadcasters, Abia State Chapter, held at the Women Development Centre, Umuahia, the governor commended the broadcasting association for their contribution to the growth of the profession.

Represented by his deputy, Ikechukwu Emetu, he described the 2026 theme, "Broadcasting Beyond the Signal: Community Impact in the Digital Era", as timely and relevant, especially at the present era where technology has fundamentally transformed the way information is created, distributed, and consumed.

Otti disclosed that the traditional boundaries of broadcasting have expanded beyond radio and television signals to encompass digital



Gov. Otti

platforms, social media ecosystems, podcasts, streaming services, and other emerging channels of communication.

He noted that in today's digital age, the true worth of broadcasting is no longer determined merely by the size of its coverage or audience reach. Rather, its value lies in its ability to positively impact communities, empower citizens with accurate and credible information, promote social inclusion, encourage accountability, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development.

According to him, broadcasters now shoulder a greater responsibility than ever before. At a time when misinformation and disinformation spread rapidly across various platforms, society depends on

professional broadcasters as trusted custodians of truth, accuracy, and ethical journalism.

The strength of democratic institutions, the unity of communities, and the education of future generations, he said, are largely influenced by the quality and credibility of information disseminated through the media.

He emphasized that the role of broadcasters extends far beyond reporting the news, they serve as educators, community mobilizers, cultural ambassadors, and catalysts for social transformation. He added that through their platforms, they shape public opinion, give voice to the marginalized, preserve cultural values, and strengthen the relationship between government and the people.

The governor reaffirmed that the media remains a critical partner in governance and development, stressing that the government's commitment to transparency, accountability, and open communication. He noted that a well-informed citizenry is fundamental to building a stronger, more prosperous, and progressive society.

Responsible broadcasting, he added, remains indispensable in achieving this vision.

He encouraged participants at the conference to engage in productive deliberations on how the broadcasting profession can continue to make meaningful contributions to society despite rapid technological advancements and evolving audience preferences.

The governor, also formally declared the conference of the Association of Broadcasters officially open.

Delivering his lecture on the conference theme, the Dean, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Abia State University, Uturu, Prof. Innocent Ihechu, charged broadcasters to prioritize accuracy and research as the foundation of public trust.

Prof. Ihechu noted that technology has made information universally accessible. However, he stressed that technology alone does not define a broadcaster.

He stressed that manipulated content and misinformation have continued to damage public trust, urging Broadcasters to commit to accuracy, diligent research, and ethical reporting to remain relevant and respected.

Political Parties, INEC Disagree Over Candidate Upload Access Codes

From Sophina Ovuike, Abuja

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and several political parties have disagreed over the availability of access codes required for uploading candidates' nomination forms ahead of the 2027 general elections.

While INEC insisted that the access codes had been released as scheduled and that training had already been conducted for political parties on their use, many parties maintained they were yet to receive the codes needed to access the commission's online nomination portal.

According to INEC's

revised timetable for the 2027 elections, political parties have until July 11, 2026, to upload nomination forms for presidential and National Assembly candidates, while submissions for governorship and State House of Assembly candidates will run from July 18 to August 8, 2026.

An official of the commission said representatives of political parties underwent training on the operation of the portal on Thursday and Friday, adding that technical support remained available throughout the nomination period.

The official dismissed concerns over possible delays,

stressing that parties still had sufficient time to complete the exercise before the deadline.

INEC's Director of Voter Education and Publicity, Victoria Eta-Messi, also rejected claims that access codes had not been released.

She explained that parties were expected to participate in the training before receiving the codes and advised those yet to obtain them to wait few days before raising complaints.

Under the electoral timetable, the online submission window for Forms EC9 and related nomination documents opened on June 27, in line with the Electoral Act, 2026, which requires political parties to submit candidates' nominations

at least 120 days before the elections.

Despite the commission's assurances, several political parties insisted they had not received the access credentials.

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) and the People's Redemption Party (PRP) said INEC had informed them that the codes would be made available once the process was completed.

The Labour Party (LP) also said it was still awaiting the codes. A senior party official disclosed that although nomination forms had already been distributed to aspirants, the party could not upload candidates' details until INEC provided access to the portal.

Similarly, the Nigeria

News

Abia Partners National Brand Project To Boost Made-in-Nigeria Product

By Charles Ogbonnaya

The Abia State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to promoting indigenous products and supporting local industries as it received a delegation from the National Brand Development and Made-in-Nigeria Project.

The delegation, led by the Executive Director of the project, Hon. Nwabueze George, and the Chairman of its Technical Committee, Alhaji Oladijoye Musiliu, paid a courtesy visit to the Deputy Governor of Abia State, Ikechukwu Emetu, at the Government House, Umuahia.

Speaking during the visit, the deputy governor said Governor Alex Otti's administration remains committed to policies that encourage local production, entrepreneurship and industrialisation. He noted that the state is focused on building a resilient economy driven by innovation, enterprise and manufacturing.

The Commissioner for Industry and SMEs, Mazi Michael Enyinnaya Akpara, welcomed the delegation and reiterated the state's readiness to collaborate with the National Brand Development and Made-in-Nigeria Project to expand opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

He described Abia as a leading hub for entrepreneurship, innovation and manufacturing, expressing confidence that the partnership would further enhance the visibility and competitiveness of products made in the state.

Earlier, the Executive Director of the project, Hon. Nwabueze George, underscored the need to promote Nigerian-made goods and develop strong national brands capable of competing in global markets.

He said the initiative seeks to increase the visibility of local products, encourage patronage of indigenous goods and create new market opportunities for Nigerian businesses.

George also announced that the National Brand Development and Made-in-Nigeria Project will hold from September 22 to 26, 2026, bringing together stakeholders from across the country to showcase indigenous products and advance the Made-in-Nigeria campaign.

In his vote of thanks, Alhaji Musiliu commended Governor Otti for what he described as the administration's remarkable achievements in rebuilding Abia State. He called for stronger collaboration among governments, manufacturers, SMEs and investors to drive industrial growth and achieve sustainable national development.

The meeting also focused on strategies for promoting local content, supporting SMEs, attracting investment and positioning Nigerian products for wider acceptance in both domestic and international markets.

Among those present were the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Industry and SMEs, Dr. Okey Iheananna; the Special Adviser on SMEs, Lady Chinwe Kanu; the Abia State Coordinator of the National Brand Development and Made-in-Nigeria.



A cross section of Bende indigenes whose medical bills were settled by Dr. Chimaobi Desmond Anyaso in Abia state recently.

Abia Lands Commissioner Showcases Otti's Development, Digital Reforms

By Ebere Tasie

Abia State Commissioner for Lands, Hon. Chaka Chukwumerije, has reaffirmed the state government's commitment to sustainable development and digital transformation while calling on the media to support ongoing reforms through responsible public enlightenment.

The commissioner made the call when he received the managers of Love FM, Reel FM and Flo FM during a courtesy visit to his office aimed at strengthening collaboration between the government and the media.

Speaking during the meeting, Chukwumerije highlighted several landmark projects being executed by the administration of Governor Alex Otti, saying they reflect the government's commitment to economic growth, institutional

reforms and improved service delivery.

Among the key projects he listed were the ongoing feasibility study for the proposed Abia Seaport, the modular refinery project at Owaza and the agro-industrial partnership with Presco, where survey teams are currently carrying out trace-cutting activities across parts of Abia North.

He urged media organisations to continue providing adequate publicity for government programmes to ensure that residents are well informed about the progress being made across the state.

The commissioner also highlighted the achievements of the Abia State Digitization Bureau. He described it as a major driver of the state's transition to technology-based governance.

He said the bureau now operates a 24-hour service, replacing manual processes with digital systems to improve efficiency, transparency and accessibility in public service.

According to him, the bureau is digitising government records, automating workflows, deploying modern data management infrastructure, expanding internet connectivity and implementing digital literacy programmes for civil servants.

Chukwumerije noted that the digitisation of land administration has significantly improved access to land records, reduced processing delays, curtailed fraudulent practices and enhanced transparency in land ownership and title documentation, thereby boosting investor

confidence.

The commissioner also conducted the media executives around the Abia State Citizens Engagement Centre. He described it as a strategic platform established by the present administration to strengthen communication between the government and the people.

He explained that the centre enables residents to submit complaints, make enquiries and receive prompt responses from relevant government agencies, thereby promoting accountability, transparency and citizen participation in governance.

Chukwumerije said both the Digitization Bureau and the Citizens Engagement Centre remain central to Governor Otti's vision of building a responsive, transparent and digitally driven government capable of delivering quality public services.

Anyaso Clears Hospital Bills For Bende Indigenes

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

Renowned humanitarian and businessman, Dr. Chimaobi Desmond Anyaso (OFUJI), has again demonstrated his commitment to improving healthcare access by settling the hospital bills of two indigent patients from Bende Federal Constituency, as part of his monthly medical assistance programme.

The beneficiaries, a 20-year-old indigene of Ihungwu Amarkalu, Igbere in Bende Local Government Area, Mr.

Uche Ekeoma, and Mrs. Akiri Chinasa, 50, from Amankwo Uzakoli, received financial support from Dr. Anyaso to offset their medical expenses following successful treatment.

Uche Ekeoma, who was admitted to the New Surgical Ward at the Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, on May 6, 2026, was treated for a massive scrotal mass complication and underwent a right inguinal herniorrhaphy. His hospital bills were fully settled through Dr. Anyaso's intervention.

Similarly, Mr. Chinasa,

who was admitted on June 6 and discharged on June 15, 2026, underwent multiple surgeries performed by the Neurosurgery Team. His medical expenses were also cleared under the humanitarian initiative.

The gesture forms part of Dr. Anyaso's regular monthly medical assistance programme designed to support indigent residents of Bende Federal Constituency facing financial challenges in accessing quality healthcare.

Beneficiaries and

their families expressed appreciation for the timely intervention. He described it as life-changing and a reflection of Dr. Anyaso's enduring compassion for the wellbeing of his people.

Dr. Anyaso's sustained humanitarian efforts, particularly in healthcare, education and community development, have continued to earn him widespread commendation across Bende Federal Constituency and beyond.

News

Veteran Writer, Pays Tribute To Nkemakolam Ugwa

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

Veteran writer, Elder Okay Ugwa, has expressed deep sorrow over the death of Nkemakolam Ugwa, describing his passing as a painful and shocking loss to his family, friends, and associates.

In a tribute, Elder Ugwa described Nkemakolam, fondly known as "Nkem," as a peaceful, humble, friendly, and ever-smiling gentleman who was deeply committed to his family and loved ones.

He recalled persuading Nkemakolam to return home from Western Nigeria in the 1980s and helping him secure employment in the then Imo Newspapers, where he distinguished himself through dedication, professionalism, and hard work.

According to him, Nkemakolam became one of the most trusted and reliable drivers attached to the office of the General Manager. Following the creation of Abia State in 1991, he was transferred to the Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, publishers of the National Ambassador Newspaper, where he continued to serve diligently.

Elder Ugwa described the deceased as a hardworking professional who left behind a legacy of integrity, commitment, and excellence.

Drawing strength from 2 Timothy 4:7-8, he said Nkemakolam had "fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith."

He prayed for the peaceful repose of his soul and urged God to grant the Ugwa family, especially the descendants of late Mazi Ugwa Onyeabo, the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss.

Meanwhile, the officiating minister of Mountain of Divine Grace Ministry, Pastor Richard Amamba, has reminded Christians of the certainty of divine judgment. He stressed that every individual will one day give account of his/her life before God.

Delivering a homily titled; "There Is a Day for Judgment", Pastor Amamba called on mourners and believers to embrace repentance and live righteous lives in preparation for eternity.

Drawing his message from Biblical passages, including Revelation 20:11-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10, and Hebrews 9:27, the cleric emphasised that no one can escape God's judgment, regardless of social status, wealth, or earthly accomplishments.

He noted that while many people neglect spiritual matters and reject the call to worship and repentance, heaven keeps a record of every action carried out on earth.

According to him, the day of judgment is certain and will ultimately determine every person's eternal destiny.

Nkemakolam Ugwa, popularly known as "Mr. Kems," was born on April 2, 1949, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, to the family of Late Mazi Robert Obasi Ugwa and Late Mrs. Mercy Chinuru Obasi Ugwa of Elugwunta Ndiobia Amaba, Isuikwuato Local Government Area of Abia State.

Renowned for his courage, he earned the nickname "Agu" (The Lion) among his peers. As a young man, he participated in the Nigerian Civil War and survived the conflict, returning home to the joy of his family. A talented footballer, he later played as a prolific striker for Gwagwala Football Club in Makurdi, Benue State, helping the team achieve notable success before a career-ending injury cut short his sporting ambitions.

Mr. Ugwa built a distinguished public service career, beginning with the Imo Newspapers in 1983 before transferring to Abia Newspapers, publishers of the National Ambassador, following the creation of Abia State in 1991. He later served in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, rising from Senior Works Superintendent to retire as Chief Works Superintendent in 2014. A devoted husband to Mrs. Pauline Ngozi Ugwa and father of six children, he was deeply committed to his family and faith.



Late Pa Nkemakolam Ugwa

Commissioner Urges Social Workers To Uphold Professionalism

By Tasie Ebere

The Abia State Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Prince Uzor Nwachukwu, has called on social workers in the state to remain diligent, ethical and committed to humanitarian service.

The commissioner made the call while receiving members of the Chartered Institute of Social Work Practitioners of Nigeria (C-ISOWN), Abia State Chapter, led by Dr. Mrs. Chinyere Naomi Thompson, during a courtesy visit to his office at the JAAC Secretariat Complex, Umuahia.

Describing social work as "God's work," Prince Nwachukwu urged practitioners to remain focused on serving

humanity and to avoid unethical practices, including the pursuit of quick wealth, which he said has tarnished the image of some professionals in the past.

He congratulated members of the institute for choosing a career dedicated to humanitarian service and encouraged them to discharge their responsibilities with integrity and professionalism.

The commissioner also advised the institute to strengthen collaboration with relevant government agencies to enhance its contributions to social development and humanitarian interventions across the state.

Earlier, the leader of the delegation, Dr. Mrs. Chinyere Naomi

Thompson, had said the visit was aimed at familiarising the Institute with the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs and updating the commissioner on the activities of C-ISOWN in Abia State.

She commended Governor Alex Otti for what she described as his remarkable developmental achievements across the 17 local government areas of the state and pledged the institute's continued support for the administration.

Dr. Thompson reaffirmed the institute's commitment to tackling social challenges such as gender-based violence, child labour, human trafficking and the operation of baby factories.

She also called for qualified and committed

professionals to take active roles in advancing social work practice in the state.

In a vote of thanks, the Chairperson of C-ISOWN, Mrs. Okwuchi Favour Anyaogu, expressed appreciation to the commissioner for granting the delegation audience and for his fatherly advice. She also commended Governor Alex Otti's leadership and prayed for continued success for his administration.

The meeting was attended by senior officials of the ministry, including the Director of Administration, Mrs. Patience Orji; Director of Chieftaincy Affairs, Mr. Demian Ngoziho; Director of Local Government, Mrs. Akpara Irene Ngozi; Director of Planning, Research and Statistics, Chief Okezie Nwoko; and Head of Department, Information and Media, Mrs. Udoirim Chikwendu.



Gov. Sim Fubara of Rivers State and emergency rescue teams at work during evacuation operations following the building collapse in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Fubara Orders Closure Of Collapsed Building Site

From Nzeuzor Jane and Maduadugwo Jane, PH

Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has ordered the immediate closure of the site of a collapsed building on Peter Odili Road in Port Harcourt, pending a full investigation into the incident that claimed several lives.

The governor issued the directive recently, during an inspection of the scene, where he expressed deep sorrow over the tragedy and sympathized with the families of those who lost their lives.

Fubara explained that he delayed visiting the site until he received an official briefing from the relevant authorities. According to him, the Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Amairigha Edward Hart, informed him that the building project falls under the jurisdiction of the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), not the Rivers State Government.

He revealed that officials of the state government had

made several attempts to inspect the project during construction to ensure compliance with approved building standards, but were reportedly denied access by the developer, who maintained that the state lacked the authority to supervise the project.

The governor stressed that the government's interest was solely to protect lives and ensure strict adherence to safety regulations, not to interfere with the development.

Describing the incident as both unfortunate and preventable, Fubara questioned how a building with apparent structural deficiencies was allowed to progress despite modern engineering practices and construction standards.

He assured the families of the victims of the government's support and vowed that no further activity would be permitted at the site until investigators establish the cause of the collapse.

The governor directed that the premises remain sealed while a comprehensive investigation is carried out to determine the circumstances surrounding the disaster.

Editorial

State Police: A Reform Worth Protecting

The renewed momentum behind the proposed establishment of state police marks one of the most consequential constitutional debates in Nigeria's democratic journey. Following the Senate's approval of the State Police Bill, attention has shifted to the State Houses of Assembly, whose decisions will determine whether the country embraces one of the most significant security reforms since independence. While the proposal deserves broad support, it must be structured with strong institutional safeguards. A poorly designed state police system could create new threats that outweigh its intended benefits.

The case for state policing has become increasingly compelling. Nigeria's security challenges have evolved beyond the capacity of a highly centralised policing structure. Banditry, kidnapping, terrorism, communal violence, cultism and farmer-herder conflicts require rapid responses informed by local knowledge. A police officer who understands the language, geography, culture and social dynamics of a community is often better positioned to prevent crime than one deployed from a distant state with little local familiarity.

Equally important is the fact that the Nigeria Police Force remains overstretched. With a population exceeding 200 million people, the current police-to-citizen ratio falls below internationally recommended standards. State police could improve intelligence gathering, strengthen community policing, reduce response time during emergencies and complement federal security agencies in maintaining law and order.

However, support for state policing should not blind Nigerians to its potential dangers. The greatest concern is the possibility that state police could become political instruments in the hands of state governors. Nigeria's political history offers enough examples of abuse of power to justify public apprehension. Without effective checks, opposition politicians, journalists, civil society activists and even traditional rulers could become victims of politically motivated intimidation under the guise of law enforcement.

A security Institution must owe its allegiance to the Constitution, not to the individual occupying Government House. The credibility of state policing will therefore depend not on the law establishing it but on the safeguards that guarantee its independence.

To prevent abuse, several measures should be incorporated into the final constitutional framework. First, the appointment of State Police Commissioners should not rest solely with governors. Their nomination should involve an independent State Police Service Commission and require confirmation by the State House of Assembly through a transparent process.

Second, operational control should be guided by law rather than executive directives. Governors, as Chief Security Officers of their states, may set security priorities, but they should not possess unchecked authority to order arrests, detentions or politically motivated deployments.

Third, every state should establish an independent Police Complaints and Accountability Commission comprising representatives of the judiciary, the Nigerian Bar Association, civil society, traditional institutions, women's organisations and human rights groups. Such bodies must possess the legal authority to investigate misconduct and recommend disciplinary action.

Funding is another critical issue. State police should enjoy guaranteed statutory funding protected from political manipulation. A governor should not be able to starve the police of funds because officers refuse unlawful orders. Likewise, annual financial audits should be mandatory and publicly accessible.

Recruitment must reflect merit, professionalism and diversity rather than political patronage. Equal opportunities should exist for qualified citizens across all local governments within each state, while promotions should remain performance-based. Training standards must also remain nationally coordinated to ensure professionalism and operational compatibility with federal agencies.

Furthermore, clear constitutional provisions should empower federal oversight institutions to intervene where credible evidence exists that a state police service is being used to undermine democracy or violate fundamental rights. Such intervention, however, should itself be subject to judicial review to prevent abuse from the centre.

The debate should no longer focus on whether Nigeria needs state police. The nation's security realities have answered that question. The real challenge is designing a system that strengthens security without weakening democracy. State police should serve the people, not political office holders.

Nigeria has an opportunity to build a modern, accountable and community-driven policing system. But haste must not replace careful institutional design. Security reforms succeed only when they balance operational efficiency with constitutional accountability. If properly structured, state police can become a lasting solution to local insecurity. If poorly designed, it risks becoming another instrument of political oppression. The choice before lawmakers is not merely to create another police force but to build one that commands public trust, protects democratic freedoms and stands firmly above partisan politics.

**LETTERS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:
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Affordable Cooking Gas Is A Necessity

Dear Editor,

The persistent increase in the price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), popularly known as cooking gas, has become a silent but severe economic crisis confronting millions of Nigerian households. The situation calls for urgent intervention by the Federal Government, the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) and other critical stakeholders in the oil and gas sector.

Not too long ago, a kilogram of cooking gas sold for between ₦800 and ₦1,000 in many parts of the country. As economic pressures mounted, the price climbed to about ₦1,500 per kilogram, stretching the budgets of ordinary families. Today, in most Nigerian cities, consumers now pay between ₦1,800 and ₦2,000 per kilogram, with prices varying according to location and retailer across different states in Nigeria. For many low-income earners, this increase has made cooking gas almost unaffordable.

This development comes at a time when Nigerians are already battling soaring food prices, rising transportation costs, electricity challenges and other inflationary pressures. The continuous rise in the cost of cooking gas has only compounded the hardship, forcing many households to reduce the number of meals they prepare daily or resort to unhealthy alternatives such as firewood and charcoal.

Ironically, Nigeria is one of Africa's largest producers of natural gas. It is therefore difficult to justify why citizens of a gas-rich nation should struggle to afford a product derived from their own natural resources. While global energy market fluctuations, exchange rate instability, transportation costs and supply chain challenges may partly explain the increase, they should not be allowed to permanently deny Nigerians access to affordable clean cooking energy.

The Federal Government must urgently review existing policies governing the domestic gas market. Greater investment is required in local gas processing, storage and distribution infrastructure to reduce dependence on imports and minimise supply disruptions. Regulatory agencies must also intensify oversight of the LPG value chain to eliminate unnecessary bottlenecks and discourage exploitative pricing practices.

Equally important is the need to encourage healthy competition among marketers while ensuring transparency in pricing. Where necessary, targeted interventions should be introduced to cushion the impact on vulnerable households without distorting the market.

Affordable cooking gas is not merely an economic issue; it is also a public health and environmental concern. The country's campaign for cleaner energy will suffer a major setback if families are forced back to firewood and charcoal, exposing women and children to harmful smoke while accelerating deforestation.

The current trend is unsustainable. Government, regulators, gas producers, marketers and all industry stakeholders must work together to restore price stability and make cooking gas affordable once again. Nigerians deserve to enjoy the benefits of the abundant natural resources with which the nation has been blessed. The time to act is now, before this silent crisis becomes an even greater social and economic burden.

**Adindu, Stephanie Nneoma
Writes from Umuahia, Abia State.**



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Abuja Digest

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COAS Seeks Innovative Solutions To Curb Kidnappings

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. WaidiShaibu, has urged military strategists and security experts to develop innovative and practical solutions to tackle the increasing wave of mass abductions across Nigeria.

Shaibu made the call in Abuja during the inauguration of the Army War College Nigeria (AWCN) Wargaming Centre, where he tasked the institution with leveraging strategic wargaming and operational analysis to address the country's evolving security challenges.

Describing mass kidnapping as one of Nigeria's most pressing security concerns, the Army Chief said the crime has continued to threaten lives, disrupt education and undermine public confidence, particularly in rural communities.

"One of the critical tasks I would like to leave with the college is how this wargaming can help address multiple mass abductions across our expansive forested areas. This remains an evolving security challenge in Nigeria," he said.

Shaibu observed that the persistent threat of kidnappings has discouraged many parents from sending their children to school, stressing that conventional security measures alone may no longer be sufficient to address the problem.

He also charged the college to evaluate the implications of proposed state policing structures on security operations and decision-making, while recommending practical strategies to improve rapid response during kidnapping incidents.

According to him, enhanced coordination among security agencies

and effective deployment of operational assets are essential to strengthening the country's response to insecurity.

The army chief expressed confidence that the college would generate research-based recommendations capable of improving Nigeria's security architecture, describing wargaming as a vital tool for testing operational strategies, analysing potential threats and supporting informed decision-making before troops are deployed.

He added that the newly inaugurated Wargaming Centre would serve as a hub for education, research, operational analysis, concept development and strategic planning, with the goal of becoming a centre of excellence for military wargaming in Nigeria and across Africa.

Earlier, the Commandant of the Army War College Nigeria, Maj.-Gen. Umar Alkali had described the facility as a major step toward strengthening professional military education and enhancing the capacity of officers in critical thinking, operational planning and strategic decision-making.

Also speaking, the Director of War and Strategy, Brig.-Gen. EytayoShoda, said the centre would provide a structured platform for testing ideas, evaluating assumptions and developing indigenous wargaming models for counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, joint operations and other national security scenarios.

The inauguration of the Wargaming Centre is expected to enhance Nigeria's strategic military planning and support ongoing efforts to combat insecurity across the country.

ECOWAS Court Orders FG To Pay N10m Damages To Journalist

The ECOWAS Community Court of Justice has ordered the Federal Government of Nigeria to pay N10 million in damages to journalist Jide Oyekunle over his assault, unlawful arrest, detention, and seizure of personal property by police officers during the August 2024 #EndBadGovernance protests in Abuja.

The judgment, delivered recently, followed a legal action instituted on Oyekunle's behalf by Avocats Sans Frontières France (Lawyers Without Borders France) under its European Union-supported eRIGHTS project, which promotes the protection of digital and human rights.

Oyekunle, who serves as Secretary of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), FCT Council, was reportedly assaulted, detained, and deprived of his mobile phone while covering the radioactive protests at Eagle Square, Abuja, on August 1, 2024. His camera was also allegedly damaged during the incident on the directive of the then Commissioner of Police for the Federal Capital Territory,

Bennethlgweh.

In its judgment, the regional court held that the actions of the Nigerian security agencies violated Oyekunle's fundamental rights to freedom of expression, personal liberty, human dignity, and property as guaranteed under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The court ruled that the journalist's detention and the confiscation of his mobile phone were unjustifiable and excessive, noting that the measures failed to satisfy the requirements of necessity under international human rights standards.

According to the court, the actions of the authorities disrupted Oyekunle's live coverage of the protest, thereby infringing on his right to freedom of expression. It further held that his assault and detention violated his rights to personal liberty and dignity, while the seizure of his mobile phone amounted to a breach of his right to own property.

Consequently, the court awarded N10 million in general damages against the Nigerian government.

Reacting to the judgment, Country Director of Avocats Sans Frontières France, Angela Uwandu Uzoma-Iwuchukwu, described the ruling as a significant victory for press freedom and digital rights.

She said the court had reaffirmed the importance of journalists' digital devices as indispensable tools of modern journalism, noting that the arbitrary confiscation of such equipment by security agencies amounts to an attack on the public's right to access information.

Uzoma-Iwuchukwu added that the judgment strengthens legal safeguards for journalists and human rights defenders covering protests and other matters of public interest across the region. She said the organisation would continue to monitor compliance with the ruling while supporting media practitioners facing similar violations.

Speaking after the judgment, Oyekunle

welcomed the decision, describing it as a landmark affirmation of journalists' right to carry out their professional duties without fear, intimidation, or harassment.

He said the ruling extends beyond his personal experience and represents a victory for journalists, media workers, and all citizens committed to freedom of expression, access to information, and democratic participation.

According to him, the judgment sends a strong message that security agencies and public institutions must be held accountable whenever they violate the fundamental rights of citizens. Oyekunle also expressed appreciation to the NUJ FCT Council, Avocats Sans Frontières France, fellow journalists, human rights advocates, and other supporters who stood by him throughout the legal process.



The Minister of Defense, Gen. Christopher Musa (Rtd) (Left) and the UK National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell (Right) during an event in Abuja recently.

Nigeria, UK move to Strengthen Defence, Security Co-operation

Nigeria and the United Kingdom have reaffirmed their commitment to deepening defence and security cooperation as both countries intensify efforts to tackle emerging security threats and promote regional stability.

The Minister of Defence, General Christopher Gwabin Musa (ret'd), gave the assurance while receiving the United Kingdom's National Security Adviser, Jonathan Powell, and his delegation at the Ship House in Abuja.

The British delegation was in Nigeria to participate

in the fourth UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership (SDP4) Dialogue, a strategic forum designed to strengthen bilateral security collaboration.

During the meeting, General Musa emphasised the need to expand co-operation in key areas, including counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, military training and regional peace and security initiatives.

He described the United Kingdom as one of Nigeria's longstanding strategic partners and stressed the importance of sustained

collaboration in addressing evolving security challenges.

Both countries also agreed to review existing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to modernise their security frameworks, enhance technical training and strengthen capacity-building programmes for the Nigerian Armed Forces.

The engagement formed part of activities at the two-day SDP4 Dialogue hosted by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) in Abuja.

The dialogue was co-chaired by Nigeria's National

Security Adviser, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, and his UK counterpart, Jonathan Powell, with discussions focusing on developing a forward-looking agenda for bilateral security cooperation.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to expanding collaboration beyond 2026, with renewed emphasis on combating terrorism, improving intelligence coordination and enhancing peace and stability in Nigeria and the wider West African region.

News



Officials of NDLEA during their anti drugs campaign to mark 2026 International Day Against Drugs Abuse and illicit trafficking in Aba, Abia state recently.

World Drug Day: Abia NDLEA Records 95 Convictions, Intensifies Anti-Drug Campaign

From Chinedu Kelechi, Aba

The Abia State Command of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), has recorded 95 convictions from 104 drug-related cases filed within the past year, as it adopts innovative and technology-driven strategies to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

The State Commander, Chigbu O. Chilee, disclosed this during a press briefing in Aba ahead of the 2026 International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (World Drug Day), observed annually on June 26.

Speaking on this year's theme, "World Drug Problem: Persisting Issues, New Challenges, Innovative Responses," Chilee said the evolving nature of drug crimes requires modern, intelligence-led approaches to effectively tackle emerging threats such as synthetic drugs, sophisticated trafficking networks and digital drug markets.

According to him, the command has strengthened its operations with support from the NDLEA Headquarters and the Abia State Government, combining enforcement with preventive measures through its War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) campaign.

He explained that the agency has restructured its drug demand reduction programme into two directorates—Counselling, Treatment and Rehabilitation (CTR), and Prevention and Sensitisation (PS)—to address both the supply and demand aspects of drug abuse.

"We cannot win this war through arrests alone. Every week, we sensitise between three and four schools across Abia State. If we reduce the number of young people getting involved in drugs, we will win the war," Chilee said.

Reviewing the command's activities between June 26, 2025, and June 26, 2026, the commander disclosed that 429 suspects, comprising 355 males and 74 females, were arrested during the period.

He said the command also seized 2,078 kilograms of illicit substances, including cocaine, heroin, cannabis sativa, methamphetamine (popularly known as mkpuru mmiri), tramadol and other psychotropic drugs.

Among the major breakthroughs recorded was the dismantling of an illegal codeine syrup production facility at Umuokapara, Arungwa, on December 11, 2025, where 9,915 bottles of illegally produced codeine syrup weighing about 1.15 tonnes were recovered.

Chilee further disclosed that two elderly suspects are currently in custody for alleged drug-related offences.

One of them, a 75-year-old man, was arrested in Umuahia with 4.6 kilograms of assorted psychotropic substances, while an 84-year-old suspect was apprehended after allegedly supplying cannabis to a 15-year-old secondary school student.

He said the minor was enrolled in counselling and rehabilitation instead of prosecution, while the elderly suspect remains in custody awaiting trial.

The commander attributed the command's high conviction rate to its intelligence-led approach, noting that thorough investigations are conducted before suspects are charged to court.

On rehabilitation, Chilee disclosed that 166 clients received counselling and treatment during the period under review, with 120 successfully completing rehabilitation programmes, while 48 others are currently undergoing treatment.

He also announced that the command received commendation awards for excellence in rehabilitation and counselling, while its Public Relations Officer, Ikechukwu Akunne, was honoured with a merit award for outstanding service.

The NDLEA boss commended Governor Alex Otti for supporting the command with operational logistics, including the donation of two Toyota Hilux vehicles, a Toyota Sienna, an Innoson vehicle and the allocation of over 8,000 square metres of land in Umuahia for the construction of a permanent state headquarters.

He reaffirmed the agency's commitment to reducing both the supply and demand of illicit drugs through effective enforcement, rehabilitation, public enlightenment and strategic partnerships.

Architects Back Abia Housing Agenda

By Ebere Tasie and Onwuka Lovina

The Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), Abia State Chapter, has pledged its full support for the housing development agenda of the Abia State Government following a courtesy visit to the Commissioner for Housing, Arc. Chiemela Charles Uzoije.

The delegation, led by the Chairman of the Institute, Arc. Emmanuel Nwankpa, visited the Commissioner recently to congratulate him on his appointment and reaffirm the Institute's commitment to partnering with the government in delivering sustainable housing across the state.

Nwankpa described Uzoije's appointment as a landmark achievement for the architectural profession in Abia, noting that it is the first time since the return to democratic rule that an architect has been appointed to head a state ministry. He said the appointment reflects Governor Alex Otti's commitment to competence, professionalism and excellence in governance.

He commended the governor for separating the Ministry of Housing from the Ministry of Lands, describing the decision as a strategic step that would strengthen housing delivery and urban renewal in the state.

The NIA chairman also praised the administration's ongoing housing initiatives and expressed appreciation to Governor Otti for appointing an architect to such a key position. He urged the commissioner to convey the Institute's

gratitude and continued support to the governor.

During the visit, the institute formally inducted Arc. Uzoije into the Abia State Chapter of the Nigerian Institute of Architects, expressing confidence in his ability to advance professional standards and contribute meaningfully to the state's housing sector.

The architects also highlighted challenges affecting the profession, including quackery, weak enforcement of building regulations, inadequate involvement of architects in development control agencies, limited

employment opportunities in the public sector and declining training infrastructure.

They assured the commissioner of the Institute's readiness to provide technical expertise in housing policy formulation, urban planning, building code development, environmental sustainability and public procurement advisory services.

The delegation further appealed for greater government collaboration through the inclusion of architects in relevant committees, support for

professional development programmes, stronger enforcement against unqualified practitioners, assistance in developing the Institute's permanent site at Ogurube Layout and backing for the 2026 Annual Architects Forum scheduled for October.

Responding, the Commissioner for Housing, Uzoije, thanked the institute for the visit and its vote of confidence. He described the gesture as a demonstration of professional solidarity and shared commitment to the development of Abia State.

Otti Building Nigeria's Best Fire Service - Alajemba

From Nwokoma Blessing, Aba

The Senior Special Assistant to the Abia State Governor on Homeland Security and Fire Service, Mr. Chukwunonye Alajemba, has said Governor Alex Otti is laying the foundation for what will become the best fire service in Nigeria, through massive investments in modern firefighting infrastructure and emergency response.

Alajemba made the assertion during the inauguration of the Osisioma Ngwa Chapter of Alpha Abia Arise at the Osisioma Ngwa Local Government Headquarters.

He said the Otti administration had embarked on comprehensive reforms in the state's fire service, including the ongoing retrofitting of the Umuahia Fire Service Station, with the Aba Station scheduled to undergo similar upgrades upon completion of the Umuahia project.

According to him, the administration's investment has significantly improved emergency response, citing a recent fire incident along Aba-Owerri Road where firefighters arrived within minutes and successfully contained the blaze, saving lives and property.

Alajemba urged members of Alpha Abia Arise in Osisioma Ngwa to intensify grassroots mobilisation in support of Governor Otti's second-term bid, charging the newly inaugurated local

government and ward executives to uphold the group's philosophy of "Otti or Nothing."

Also speaking, the Governor's Special Adviser on Monitoring and Evaluation, Mazi Ugochukwu Agodi Okoroafor, described Osisioma Ngwa as one of the fastest-developing local government areas in Abia and the South-East.

He attributed the area's growing economic potential to the presence of Geometric Power, noting that stable electricity remains a key driver of industrial and economic development.

On his part, the Commissioner in the Abia State Local Government Service Commission, Dr. Godwin Chinedu Duru, commended the large turnout at the inauguration, particularly the participation of women. He described them as a critical force in the electoral process. He said Alpha Abia Arise was more than a political structure, describing it as a platform for nurturing future leaders and strengthening grassroots political engagement across the state.

In their remarks, the Osisioma Ngwa coordinator of Alpha Abia Arise, Comrade Ndubuisi Idimogu, and the Ward 8 Women Leader, Mrs. Faith Nwafor, thanked the leadership of the group for attending the inauguration despite their busy schedules. They pledged to mobilise support for Governor Otti at the grassroots ahead of future elections.

Religion

Bishop David Oyedepo: Exploring Biblical Laws Of Success!

By David Oyedepo

We discover from scriptures that Biblical laws are simply spiritual laws and are higher than natural laws. As it is written: For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord (Isaiah 55:8). Thus, by engaging spiritual laws, we can suspend and nullify the effects of all other laws. The Bible says: For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

There are quite a number of success theories all over town; but success delivers on laws, not admonitions or exaltations. It is also written: This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt have good success (Joshua 1:8). This helps us to understand that no one will ever command success without embracing God's commandments. We have to do what the law says before we can command good success. Only when we obey will He set us up on high above the nations of the earth.

What is this foundational law?

The Law of Love: The law of love is the anchor law in the school of success as far as the Kingdom of God is concerned. As it is written: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him (1 Corinthians 2:9). That implies that genuine lovers of God are candidates for path finding, pace-setting, trail-blazing order of accomplishments.

Just show me a true lover and I will show you another global giant in the making. For

me, my heartbeat for God is my greatest asset. When we become genuine lovers of God, we become candidates for outstanding success. No genuine lover of God ends up a failure; he may be challenged but it is only temporary. He may be confronted and grievously hated, but he will emerge an enviable champion at the end. So, the love of God remains the unquestionable platform for outstanding success.

The Law of Divine Ideas: Divine ideas are treasures of unusual values, which are far above natural and intellectual ideas. They are not mere religious philosophies. As the saying goes 'Every empire is built on ideas.' However, if natural ideas built empires, then divine ideas will build super empires. A divine idea is eternally superior



"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Joshua 1:8)".

to every other form of idea. For instance, by divine ideas, Job built a business empire as he became the greatest of all men in the East. Also, by divine ideas, Joseph took over the most powerful nation in those days because he was able to discover a means of preserving food for 14 years without the use of chemicals. Furthermore, by divine idea, we are told that Isaac sowed in that land, he waxed great, went forward and became very great and the philistines envied him (Job 29:4; Genesis 26:12-14).

Laws of Spiritual Empowerment: This simply means the law of the Anointing. The Anointing of the Holy Spirit is one of the vital instruments for commanding outstanding success. This is why every destiny is at a risk without it. We saw that picture very clearly in the life of the Apostles. Initially, they were frustrated and fearful individuals, until they receive the Holy Ghost, Who first destroyed their fear, and gave them supernatural command. Concerning the Apostles, the Bible records: ... when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

The effect of this was that the Church began to experience several dimensions of outstanding success as almost the whole city was added to the church (Acts 2:38-40). So, every child of God needs the Anointing to fulfil his/her destiny in grand style.

Even Jesus, the son of the Most High needed to be empowered, in order to fulfil His mission on earth. Remember, for 30 years, people could not distinguish Him from a carpenter's son. But after He was anointed, His fame went through the entire region (Luke 4:14; 18-20). So, the Anointing is what empowers us for change of



levels. Unfortunately, many destinies have been manoeuvred, manipulated, molested and harassed by the enemies because the Anointing to subdue them is absent. Undoubtedly, the enemy will not bow to our religion or the number of scriptures we quote; he will only bow to the power of God at work in us. It takes power to tread upon serpents and scorpions unhurt. This is why Christianity without power is a frustrated religion (Psalm 66:3; Acts 10:38).

Also, it is important to recognise that empowerment is at a cost; we can't wish our way into it (Luke 14:28). Interestingly, fasting is one of the capital prices paid for empowerment. Thus, we must give our fasting time maximum value by engaging in it for empowerment. As we do so, I see us experiencing outstanding and enviable success, after the order of Christ.

Nevertheless, one step to successful living is being born-again. If you are not born-again, you are not entitled to it. 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 my sins. Cleanse me with Your precious Blood. Today, I accept You as my Lord and personal Saviour. Thank You Jesus for saving me! Now I know I am born again!"

For further reading, please get my books: Success Strategies, Success Systems, Maximising Destiny, Exploring the Secrets of Success. I invite you to come and fellowship with us at the Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, Ota, the covenant home of Winners. We have five services on Sundays, holding at 6:00 a.m., 7:50 a.m., 9:40 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 1:20 p.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 call 01-4548070, 01-4548280; or E-mail: feedback@lfcw.org.

Family Matters

By Ihuoma Egbeogu

The family is widely regarded as the foundation of society. It is the first and most important social institution where a child begins life and learns basic values. In the family, children are taught morals, discipline, respect, honesty, and responsibility. These lessons shape their character and guide their behavior as they grow. Because of this, the kind of home a child grows up in greatly affects the kind of adult he or she will become. When the family fails in its duties, the impact is not only felt at home but also spreads to the wider society.

In many communities today, there is a growing increase in social problems. These include juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, cultism, prostitution, violence, theft, and other criminal activities. Although these problems may be caused by

many factors, the failure of the family remains one of the major reasons. When children do not receive proper care, guidance, and moral training at home, they find it difficult to know what is right or wrong. Such children are easily influenced by bad friends and negative habits in society.

Parents have a very important role in raising children. Their duty is not only to provide food, clothing, and education but also to guide their children morally and emotionally. Parents are expected to teach values like honesty, hard work, respect for others, self-control, and kindness. However, in today's busy world, many parents have little time for their children. Some parents are always working, while others face family problems such as quarrels, domestic violence, separation, or neglect. As a result, many children grow up without proper attention, love, and guidance.

When families fail in their responsibilities, society feels the effect. Schools often experience indiscipline among students who misbehave and refuse to follow rules. Communities also become less safe due to increasing crime and insecurity. In workplaces, some workers lack honesty, discipline, and commitment. Governments are then forced to spend a lot of money and effort trying to solve problems that could have been prevented if families had done their part properly. This shows that the problems in society often begin from the home.

In addition, when family values are weak, the entire society becomes affected. Important values such as respect for elders, care for neighbors, and love for the community begin to disappear. People become more selfish and less concerned about others. Over time, this leads to moral decay, social disorder, and loss of cultural values. A society without strong families becomes

unstable and unsafe for everyone.

However, this problem can still be solved if proper steps are taken. Parents need to spend more time with their children and show good examples in their daily lives. Religious institutions, schools, and community leaders should also help in teaching good morals and values. Schools should focus not only on academic work but also on character building. Government and social organizations should also support programs that

strengthen family life and promote responsible parenting.

In conclusion, the strength of any society depends on the strength of its families. The family is the first place where future leaders and responsible citizens are formed. When families do their duties well, society becomes peaceful and successful. But when families fail, society suffers the consequences. Therefore, building strong families should be the responsibility of everyone, because a better society begins from the home.



"However, in today's busy world, many parents have little time for their children"

News

Standup for Women Society Empowers Members With Vocational Skills In Umuahia

By Ifeanyichukwu Faith and Onwuka Lovina

In a bid to promote women empowerment, entrepreneurship, and economic self-reliance, Standup for Women Society (SWS), has organized Skills Acquisition and Women Empowerment Programme for members of the association in Umuahia, Abia State.

The empowerment programme, which was held at the Ministry of Women Affairs, NFWP Office Premises, Umuahia, brought together women from different backgrounds for practical hands-on training in perfume making, liquid soap production, and bleach making. The initiative was designed to equip participants with income generating skills capable of improving livelihoods and encouraging financial independence.

Speaking during the event, the Chairperson of Standup for Women Society, Dr. Helen Ahuruanya, commended members of the organization for their unwavering support and contributions toward the success of the programme, noting that collective commitment made the empowerment exercise possible.

According to her, the organization remains committed to supporting vulnerable women and girls by creating opportunities that foster self development and economic stability.

"Our vision as an organization is to empower vulnerable women and girls through meaningful support systems and practical opportunities that can help them become self reliant and economically independent", she said.

Dr. Ahuruanya explained that although the association has over the years extended support to vulnerable women across communities, this year's programme was intentionally designed as an in-house empowerment initiative to strengthen members of the organization directly with practical vocational skills.

"We have always reached out to vulnerable women in different communities, but this time, we decided to empower our members internally by equipping them

with practical skills they can use to start small businesses, support their families, and improve their standard of living", she added.

She encouraged beneficiaries to maximize the opportunity by putting the acquired knowledge into practice, stressing that skill acquisition remains one of the most effective pathways to financial independence and personal growth.

"Learning a skill is one thing, but making good use of it is what truly creates change. I encourage every participant to practice what they have learnt here and turn it into something meaningful for themselves and their families", she said.

One of the beneficiaries, Mrs. Catherine Osondu, expressed gratitude to the organizers for what she described as a timely and impactful initiative, promising to apply the knowledge gained during the training.

"This programme has really opened our eyes to opportunities around us. I have learnt practical skills that I believe can help me earn an income and become more productive. I sincerely appreciate the organizers for investing in women like us", she stated.

Participants at the event actively engaged in the practical sessions and commended the leadership of Standup for Women Society for prioritizing women empowerment through vocational training, describing the initiative as timely, impactful, and beneficial.

The programme further highlighted the organization's commitment to strengthening women's economic capacity and encouraging self-reliance through practical and sustainable empowerment initiatives.



The Director, Centre for Gender, Youth and Child Development (CGYCD), MOUUAU, Abia state, Prof. Mabel Ifeoma Onwuka (Middle), presenting her new Book to the University's Demonstration Primary School recently.

Rivers Assembly receives Fubara's 2026- 2028 Fiscal play

From Nzeuzor Jane and Maduadugwor Jane, PH

The Rivers State House of Assembly has received Governor Siminalayi Fubara's 2026-2028 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), marking the legislature's first plenary session in more than three months.

The fiscal framework was presented during an emergency sitting held recently at the Assembly's legislative quarters along Aba Road in PortHarcourt.

The speaker Martin Amaehwule read the

governor's letter transmitting the three-year expenditure framework to the House, signalling a possible resumption of full legislative activities after months of inactivity.

The Assembly had not held plenary since March, when lawmakers screened commissioner nominees submitted by Governor Fubara and rejected four of them. Before then, the House last met in January, when it initiated impeachment proceedings against the governor amid the

prolonged political crisis in the state.

The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework is a key fiscal policy document that outlines government revenue and expenditure projections and serves as the foundation for the preparation of annual budgets.

Although the lawmakers formally received the document, deliberation on its contents was deferred to a later date.

The reason for the recent emergency sitting

was not disclosed before the session, prompting speculation that it was convened to address matters relating to the state's 2026 budget process.

The submission of the MTEF is expected to pave the way for presentation and consideration of the 2026 Appropriation Bill, while the Assembly's reconvening is seen as a positive step towards restoring legislative business and strengthening fiscal planning in Rivers State.

Director Donates Soil Science Books To MOUUAU Primary School

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

The Director of the Centre for Gender, Youth and Child Development (CGYCD), Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU), Prof. Mabel Ifeoma Onwuka, has urged children to become environmentally conscious and actively contribute to tackling climate change for sustainable agriculture and a healthier environment.

Prof. Onwuka made the call during a visit to

the university's Demonstration Primary School (DPS), where she donated copies of her children's book, Greatness Grows from the Soil: Discovering Soil Science, along with customized inspirational notebooks to pupils.

Speaking during the presentation, the Professor of Soil Science said the book was written to introduce children to the vital role of soil in food production, environmental sustainability, and climate change mitigation. She encouraged the pupils to become future problem-solvers by learning how to

grow food, protect the soil, and care for the environment.

According to her, the publication employs simple stories and practical activities, including gardening, composting, and biochar production, to stimulate children's interest in soil science, promote environmental stewardship, and inspire the next generation of agricultural innovators.

Receiving the books on behalf of the school, the Head Teacher, Dr. Vera I. Akpan, expressed appreciation to Prof. Onwuka for the donation, describing it as a timely initiative that would

inspire pupils to embrace science, agriculture, and environmental responsibility from an early age. She commended the author for presenting complex scientific concepts in a simple and engaging manner for children.

The donation underscores MOUUAU's commitment to promoting environmental education, nurturing future scientists, and equipping young learners with the knowledge and values needed to advance sustainable development, food security, and climate resilience.

Photos Speak



Abia State Comm for Arts, Culture and Creative Economy, Hon. Matthew Ekwuribe (1st R) showing Abia State Deputy Gov, Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu (2nd L) some of the artworks, during the 2026 CANVAS Arts and Culture Day, organised by the Abia State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy in collaboration with the House of Crystal Empire to commemorate the 2026 World Arts Day at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.



Gov of Enugu State, Peter MBA (5th L), Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo (5th R), Director-General of the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC), Dr. Jobson Ewalefor and others, during the Federal Government official hand over of the Akanulbiam International Airport (AIIA), Enugu, to the concessionaires, Aero Alliance Limited, under a public-private partnership arrangement at the international terminal of AIIA, Enugu,



Former Abia State Attorney General, and Comm for Justice, Chief UmehKalu SAN (9th R), The Group spokesman and Former Abia SSG, Prof. MkpAguMkpa (11th R), Chief Chris Ikesi (13th R) and others, as Leaders of a Non-Political, and Nonpartisan Group, Alliance for Good Governance in Abia State, Stakeholders, Captains of Industry and Accomplished Professionals from Abia North Senatorial Zone unanimously endorsed Gov Alex Otti, for a second term at Abiriba, Ohafia LGA of Abia State



L-R: Chairman, Abia State Judicial Panel of Inquiry on the Recovery of Govt Properties and Funds, Hon. Justice Duruoha-Igwe (Rtd) and Vice-Chancellor of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU), Prof. Ursula NgoziAkanwa, during a courtesy visit to the Vice-Chancellor of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU), Prof. Ursula NgoziAkanwa by the Abia State Judicial Panel of Inquiry on the Recovery of Govt Properties and Funds, led by Hon. Justice Duruoha-Igwe (Rtd) at Michael Okpara University, Umudike.



L-R: Chief UmehKalu, SAN and The Paramount Ruler of Abiriba, HRM EzeKaluKaluOgbu IV, as Leaders of a Non-Political, and Nonpartisan Group, Alliance for Good Governance in Abia State, Stakeholders, Captains of Industry and Accomplished Professionals from Abia North Senatorial Zone unanimously endorsed Gov Alex Otti, for a second term at Abiriba, Ohafia LGA of Abia State



L-R: SA to AbiaGov on Local Govt and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon. Magdalene Ugoanusi, GM, Abia Newspapers and Publishing Cooperation, Hon Jones Ike and SSA to AbiaGov on Culture, Arts and Creative Economy, Hon. Matilda Anyamele, during the 2026 CANVAS Arts and Culture Day, organised by the Abia State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy in collaboration with the House of Crystal Empire to commemorate the 2026 World Arts Day at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.



Cultural dance displays, during the 2026 CANVAS Arts and Culture Day, organised by the Abia State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy in collaboration with the House of Crystal Empire to commemorate the 2026 World Arts Day at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.



A cross section of some of the participants, during the 2026 CANVAS Arts and Culture Day, organised by the Abia State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy in collaboration with the House of Crystal Empire to commemorate the 2026 World Arts Day at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.



Abia State Government

Ministry of Power and Public Utilities

Ref: MPPU/AD/013/III

23rd June 2026

INVITATION TO BID: CONSTRUCTION OF 1 X 7.5MVA, 33/11KV INJECTION SUBSTATION

The Abia State Government, through the Ministry of Power and Public Utilities Umuahia, invites qualified and experienced companies to submit technical and financial bids for the Construction of New 33KV Feeder and 1 X 7.5 MVA, 33/11kV injection substation located at Ogurube Layout, Umuahia.

PROJECT SCOPE

The scope of work encompasses the entire turnkey construction of the new feeder and injection substation, including but not limited to the following:

Section A: From Ohiya Transmission Station to Ogurube Layout Axis at Umuahia

- Construction of a Dedicated Dual 33KV Power Supply Line from Ohiya Transmission Station directly to the new Injection Substation at Ogurube Layout, Umuahia to improve operational reliability.
- Creation of New 33KV Feeder Around Ogurube Layout Axis, Umuahia targeted to reduction in line load and voltage drop and improved network flexibility.

Section B: Construction of 7.5 MVA, 33/11kV Injection Substation at Ogurube Layout, Umuahia.

A. Civil Works

- Site clearing, perimeter fencing, and guard house construction.
- Design and construction of heavy-duty equipment plinths (transformer foundations, switchgear foundations).
- Construction of the Control Building to house switchgear, control panels, batteries, and operator offices.
- Cable trenches, earthing pits, and site drainage systems.

B. Electromechanical Works

- Supply, delivery, and installation of one (1) 7.5 MVA, 33/11kV Power Transformer [On-Load Tap Changer (OLTC) is required].
- Supply and installation of 33kV outdoor Vacuum Circuit Breakers (VCB) or SF6 Circuit Breakers, isolators, and surge arresters.
- Supply and installation of 11kV Indoor Switchgear (including Incomer and Outgoing feeder panels).
- Supply and installation of 33kV and 11kV Power cables, control cables, and ac
- Supply and installation of AC/DC auxiliary supply systems (battery banks and chargers).

C. Protection and Control Systems

- Supply and installation of numerical protection relays (for overcurrent, earth fault, etc.).
- SCADA system integration and communication interface.
- Control and relay panels for the 75 MVA transformer and outgoing 11kV feeders.
- Installation of a station earthing grid to ensure safety.

D. Testing and Commissioning

- Complete pre-commissioning tests (insulation resistance, turns ratio, vector group, oil dielectric strength, etc.).
- Getting approval from local authorities (such as NEMSA) and coordinating with the New Era Distribution Company for final energization.
- Energization and final system handover.

RFQ REQUIREMENTS

Company/vendors must submit their bids in two separate sealed envelopes (Technical and Financial) and soft copies in an encrypted USB for each section.

The **Technical Bid** must include:

- **Company Profile:** Proof of registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and registration with Abia State Government and valid engineering licenses (COREN, NEMSA, etc) and payment of Tender Fee.
- **Experience:** Verifiable track record of similar power projects completed within the last [5] years.
- **Method Statement:** Proposed project timeline (A clear project timeline - Gantt chart), work methodology, Bill of Quantities, Drawings, Technical / Test Certificates of Major Equipment and Health, Safety, and Environmental (HSE) policy.
- Copy of the completed financial template (See below).
- Financial Capability: Audited financial statements for the past 3 years.

SITE INSPECTION

A mandatory site visit and pre-bid meeting will be scheduled one (1) week from the date of publication.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

All proposals must be submitted in a sealed envelopes & USB clearly marked: "**RFQ FOR CONSTRUCTION OF 1 X 7.5 MVA INJECTION SUBSTATION**" and "**RFQ CONSTRUCTION OF 33KV ELECTRICITY FEEDER**" addressed to:

The Honourable Commissioner,
Ministry of Power and Public Utilities,
P.M.B 7226, Umuahia,
Abia State.

The Completed proposal must reach the Planning, Research and Statistics Department of the ministry within three weeks (21 days) from the date of this publication.

Continued on page 12

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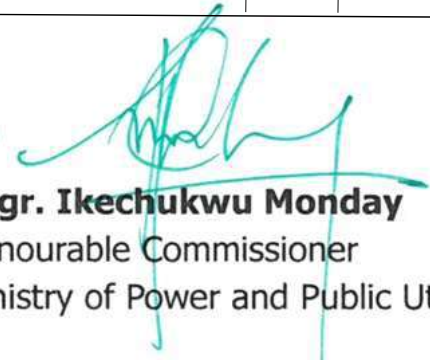
Financial Template

Section A: Construction of Dual 33kV Electricity Feeder from Ohiya Transmission Station to Ogurube Layout Axis at Umuahia.

Item	Description of Materials And Services	Qty	Unit	Unit Rate (NGN)	Total Amount (NGN)
1	Preliminaries Mobilization, route survey, Vegetation clearing etc.				
2	Construction of 33KV HIGH VOLTAGE				
	40FT High Tension Reinforced Concrete Vibrated Pole				
	34ft High Tension Reinforced Concrete Vibrated Pole				
	150mm ² Aluminum Bare Conductor (3 phase)				
	33KV Cross Arm (9ft)				
	Other Accessories Required				
3	Earthing				
	Copper Wire 70mm ² For Ht Line Earthing				
	Silicon Pot With Spindle				
	Earth Rod 16mm ²				
	Other Accessories Required				
4	Testing, NEMSA inspection, DISCO Connection & Commissioning				
5	Labour & Logistics				
	TOTAL				

SECTION B: Construction of 7.5 MVA, 33/11kV Injection Substation at Ogurube Layout, Umuahia.

Item	Description of Materials And Services	Qty	Unit	Unit Rate (NGN)	Total Amount (NGN)
1	Civil Works				
	Site clearing, leveling, and perimeter fencing				
	Construction of Control Room Building				
	Transformer Plinth & Switchgear Foundations				
	Cable trenches, drainage, and yard graveling				
2	Supply of Substation Equipment				
	7.5 MVA 33/11kV Power Transformer - Tier 1 Manufacturer				
	33kV Outdoor Vacuum Circuit Breaker (VCB)				
	33kV Isolators and Surge Arresters				
	11kV Indoor Switchgear Panels (Incomer & Feeders)				
	110V DC Battery Bank and Charger Unit				
3	Cables and Earthing				
	33kV and 11kV Power & Control Cables				
	Station Earthing Grid and Grounding Rods				
4	Installation of all Civil & Electrical equipment				
5	Testing, NEMSA inspection, DISCO Connection & Commissioning				
6	Labour and Logistics				
	TOTAL				


Engr. Ikechukwu Monday
 Honourable Commissioner
 Ministry of Power and Public Utilities

News

Abia Honours Diaspora Adventurer Who Drove From Europe To Ohafia

By Charles Oghonnaya

The Abia State Government has commended Netherlands-based Abian, Mr. Azubuike Onwuka, for completing an extraordinary transcontinental road journey from Amsterdam, Netherlands, to Ohafia in Abia State, describing the feat as a remarkable demonstration of courage, resilience and commitment to reconnecting with his ancestral roots.

Onwuka, who travelled through 13 countries and covered more than 10,000 kilometres over a period of 50 days, was received at the Government House, Umuahia, by the Deputy Governor of Abia State, Ikechukwu Emetu, on behalf of Governor Alex Otti.

Speaking during the reception, Emetu hailed the young adventurer for undertaking what he described as a historic and inspiring expedition that reflects the determination and adventurous spirit of the Abia people.

According to the deputy governor, Onwuka's journey transcended geographical boundaries and represented a deeper quest for identity, heritage and cultural reconnection.

He noted that despite the numerous challenges encountered during the trip, the Netherlands-based Abian remained focused on his goal of tracing his roots and experiencing Africa firsthand.

"Your journey is a powerful reminder that determination, courage and resilience can overcome barriers many people consider impossible. You have made Abia proud and become a source of inspiration to young people across Nigeria and beyond," Emetu said.

The deputy governor disclosed that he first learned about the journey while Onwuka was still in Lagos and immediately recognized its significance. He described the feat as a testament to the power of perseverance and a practical example to young Nigerians that ambitious dreams can be achieved through commitment and hard work.

Emetu also lauded Onwuka for donating the 1998 Honda CR-V used for the expedition to the Abia State Government.

Describing the vehicle as a historical and cultural asset, he revealed that the government would preserve it as part of the state's

growing heritage collection.

He explained that the administration is currently developing heritage preservation projects, including the Ojukwu Bunker, and assured that the donated vehicle would be properly maintained as a symbol of endurance, cultural identity and the enduring bond between Abians in the diaspora and their homeland.

"This vehicle is more than a means of transportation. It represents resilience, heritage and the unbreakable connection between our people abroad and their roots. It will be preserved as part of our history and serve as an inspiration to future generations," he stated.

The deputy governor added that the vehicle could also become a tourism attraction and contribute to the promotion of the state's cultural heritage.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Creative Economy, Hon. Matthew Ekwuribe, who presented Onwuka to the Deputy Governor, described him as a proud son of Ohafia whose remarkable road trip was motivated by a desire to reconnect with his heritage and witness firsthand the transformation taking place in Abia State.

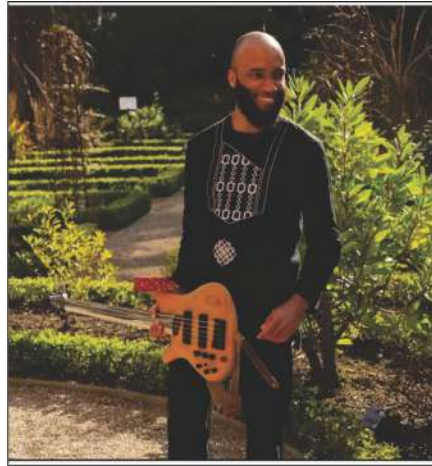
Ekwuribe said the journey underscored the importance of cultural identity and reflected the strong connection many members of the diaspora maintain with their ancestral homeland.

Speaking during the reception, Onwuka expressed appreciation to the government and people of Abia State for the warm welcome accorded him.

He described the visit as one of the most memorable moments of his life and recounted the experiences gained during the expedition, which exposed him to different cultures, languages and lifestyles across Africa and Europe.

According to him, the trip was not without challenges, including a brief detention in Senegal, but he remained committed to completing the mission.

"I wanted to understand where my ancestors came from. Reading about a place is different from standing on the soil, hearing the language and experiencing the culture firsthand. This journey has helped me better understand



who I am and where I come from," he said.

Onwuka explained that growing up in the Netherlands with a Dutch

mother and Nigerian father fueled his desire to learn more about his Igbo heritage and connect directly with the people,

culture and environment of his ancestral homeland.

He described arriving in Abia State as one of the highlights of the entire expedition, noting that the level of infrastructure and organisation he observed distinguished the state from many places he visited during the journey.

The adventurer commended the developmental strides of Governor Alex Otti's administration and expressed pride in being identified as a son of Abia.

In a symbolic gesture, Onwuka formally handed over the keys of the expedition vehicle to the state government and expressed hope that it would be displayed in a museum or cultural facility as a source of inspiration for future generations.

The 1998 Honda CR-V, which successfully

completed the journey from Amsterdam to Ohafia, bears both Dutch and Nigerian registration plates, symbolising Onwuka's dual heritage and serving as a bridge between his European upbringing and African roots.

The vehicle now stands as a lasting symbol of a journey that connected two continents, multiple cultures and one enduring identity.

Among government officials present during the reception were the Commissioner for Trade and Commerce, Dr. Mrs. Salome Obiukwu; the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy, Chibuzo Ehiemere; and the Special Assistant to the Governor on Entertainment, Mr. Okechukwu Martins (J-Martins).

Diri Celebrates Emefienim, Ebebi at 60, Commends Their Contributions to Bayelsa

From Owunna Goodness -Bayelsa

Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri, has felicitated with the Managing Director of Premium Trust Bank, Dr. Emmanuel Emefienim, and former Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State, Chief Peremobowei Ebebi, on the occasion of their 60th birthdays. He described both men as exemplary leaders whose lives have been marked by service, excellence and impactful contributions to society.

The governor, represented by his deputy, Dr. Peter Akpe, joined family members, associates and well-wishers at separate celebrations held on in Warri, Delta State, and Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

At the dedication of the newly completed Champion Cathedral Annex of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in Effurun-Warri, Governor Diri praised Dr. Emefienim for his commitment to the service of God and humanity, noting that the construction of the magnificent church edifice reflected his devotion and generosity.

Diri said, Emefienim had distinguished himself not only as a successful banker, but also as a philanthropist and devoted Christian whose life continues to inspire many.

According to him, the Premium Trust Bank chief has become a source of pride to Bayelsa, adding that his leadership has transformed the relatively young financial institution into one of the country's fastest-growing banking brands.

Diri stated that Emefienim's achievements were evidence of the rewards of dedication, sacrifice and unwavering faith in God. Speaking on behalf of the government and people of Bayelsa State, the governor said, the state was proud to identify with the banking executive, whom he described as one of its outstanding ambassadors.

He noted that, Emefienim's success story demonstrated the limitless possibilities available to those who remain committed to excellence and service.

The week-long programme, which culminated in the church dedication and birthday thanksgiving service, featured a sermon titled "Wonderful."

The General Overseer of the RCCG, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, represented by the Continental Overseer, Pastor Kalu Ndukwe, said God would continue to perform wonders in the lives of those who trust and believe in Him. He also commended Emefienim's dedication to God's work and his contributions to the growth of the church.

In his remarks, Dr. Emefienim reflected on his

relationship with Bayelsa State, recalling that his banking career blossomed during his more than two decades of professional engagement in the state.

He acknowledged the role Bayelsa played in shaping his career and personal growth, describing the state as a significant part of his success story.

Emefienim expressed appreciation to Governor Diri, Deputy Governor Akpe, the RCCG leadership and all those who joined in celebrating the milestone.

Meanwhile, at a separate event held at Latik Hotel in Yenagoa, Governor Diri paid glowing tribute to former Deputy Governor Chief Peremobowei Ebebi for his enduring contributions to the development of Bayelsa State.

Represented by Dr. Akpe, the governor highlighted Ebebi's distinguished public service career, which saw him serve as a member and later Speaker of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly before becoming Deputy Governor.

Diri described Ebebi as a respected political leader whose influence and connection with the people have remained strong long after leaving office.

Diri noted that the former deputy governor's name had become synonymous with grassroots politics and public service in Bayelsa due to his accessibility and dedication to the welfare of the people.

Speaking personally, Deputy Governor Akpe described Ebebi as a mentor and leader, recalling that he gained valuable administrative experience while serving as Head of Administration in the Office of the Deputy Governor during Ebebi's tenure.

Chairman of the occasion and former Bayelsa Deputy Governor, Rear Admiral Gboribiogha John Jonah (ret'd), described the celebrant as a people-oriented leader with a remarkable ability to unite and inspire others.

Other speakers, including the Special Adviser to the Governor on Religious Matters, Rev. God'spover Asingba, and the Alei of Aleibiri, HRH James Sarakiri, praised Ebebi's leadership qualities, humility and commitment to community development.

Responding, Chief Ebebi thanked God for preserving his life and expressed appreciation to Governor Diri, Deputy Governor Akpe and all guests who attended the celebration. He said, the successful event was a testament to God's grace and the goodwill he had enjoyed from friends, colleagues and associates over the years.

News

A'Ibom Medical City, Most Ambitious Healthcare Project In Nigeria - Prof. Pate

From Lovina Emole

The Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate has described the Medical City project in Akwa Ibom State, as one of the most audacious healthcare infrastructure projects in Nigeria.

The minister who stated this in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State capital while unveiling the world-class Medical City recently commended Governor Umo Eno for his vision and commitment to healthcare transformation.

"You have shown remarkable vision, commitment and passion for your people. What we are witnessing here reflects the aspirations of the Federal Government's healthcare reform agenda," the Minister said.

Prof. Pate assured the state government of the Federal Government's commitment to supporting the successful completion and operation of the project.

He also pledged to facilitate engagement with Nigerian healthcare professionals in the diaspora who may be willing to contribute their expertise toward the development of the Medical City and the country's healthcare sector.

The Minister urged the state government to consider making health insurance mandatory to ensure wider coverage and improved access to healthcare services for resident.

Speaking earlier, Governor, Eno had said the vision was conceived not only for the benefit of Akwa Ibom people, but also for Nigerians and Africans seeking access to quality healthcare services. He added that it aligned with the healthcare objectives of his administration's ARISE Agenda as well as the Federal Government's Renewed Hope Agenda.

The governor disclosed that the project occupies approximately 100 hectares of land, with various sections designated for different medical specialties and healthcare-related services.

Governor Eno expressed appreciation to President Bola Tinubu for creating an enabling environment and providing support to sub-national governments through ongoing reforms.

"The facility is designed to drastically reduce medical tourism by providing technologically advanced, patient-centred healthcare services comparable to global standards. This project is not just a construction project; it is an investment in the future health and prosperity of our people," the governor said.

He added that the Medical City is expected to become financially self-sustaining in the long-term, while creating employment opportunities and stimulating economic growth.

Providing an overview of the project, the Commissioner for Health, Dr. Emmanuel Ekem John and the Project Manager, Dr. Teinye Isokariari described the facility as more than a hospital, calling it "a journey" toward healthcare excellence.

According to Dr Isokariari, the Medical City will comprise a 10-storey complex housing 62 medical specialties and equipped with cutting-edge technology capable of delivering world-class healthcare services.

He disclosed that 100 Akwa Ibom indigenes would be sent abroad for specialized training six months before the completion of the facility, to enable them operate the sophisticated equipment to be installed in the centre.

Dr. Isokariari further revealed that the structure is supported by 356 foundation piles to ensure maximum stability and durability, assuring stakeholders that the project would meet global standards.

'We Want A World Where No Girl Is Stigmatized Because Of Menstrual Cycle'

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

The Office of the Wife of the Governor of Abia State, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs, commemorated the 2026 World Menstrual Hygiene and Management Day in Umuahia the state capital.

The event was held under the theme "Together for a Period Friendly World."

Speaking at the Ministry of Women Affairs Complex, the wife of the Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, said the gathering was an opportunity to promote access to quality menstrual hygiene and break the stigma surrounding menstruation.

"We want a world where no girl is disadvantaged or stigmatized because of her menstrual cycle. Many girls miss school because of menstruation, and that is not acceptable," she said.

Represented by the wife of the Deputy Governor, Mrs. Adaeze Emetu, Mrs. Otti called for urgent government action to invest



Abia State Governor's Wife, Mrs. Priscilla Otti

in better sanitation and remove barriers to menstrual hygiene management. She urged girls not to let menstruation limit their aspirations.

"To our girls: do not limit yourselves because of menstruation. As we work together to build a better and stronger Abia, no girl should be stigmatized because of her menstrual cycle," she further stated.

The Commissioner for Women Affairs, Dr.

Maureen Aghukwa, said the day was a reminder of the challenges many girls face in accessing menstrual hygiene products.

"Today we join the rest of the world to raise awareness about the impact of menstrual hygiene. Many girls have difficulty accessing menstrual hygiene products, and that is not right. As a government, we want to close that gap and remain

committed to creating an environment where every girl can thrive without limit," she said.

Dr. Aghukwa urged stakeholders to unite against harmful traditional practices and support efforts to ensure girls can manage their periods with dignity.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Theodora Ngozika Igboaruka, warned that limited access to menstrual hygiene products often leads to infections and other health complications. She called on governments and policymakers to establish pad banks in public spaces and schools, encourage local production, and teach girls how to use reusable pads.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women Affairs, Mrs. Becky Ogechi Oguama, and Adieze Orji Okoronkwo of the African Women Lawyers Association also reaffirmed their commitment to promoting menstrual hygiene and upholding the dignity of womanhood.

NDLEA Arrests Mexican, 4 Nigerians Over Alleged Involvement In Illicit Drug Operation

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), has dismantled a large-scale methamphetamine production facility hidden inside a forest in Oyo State and arrested a Mexican national alongside four Nigerians allegedly involved in the illicit operation.

The agency disclosed the development in a statement issued recently by its Director of Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi.

According to the statement, the clandestine laboratory was uncovered on June 17, 2026, during a special operation by NDLEA tactical

operatives at Tapa Village in Ibarapa North Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the agency, Brig.-Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (retd.), described the facility as a sophisticated, heavily fortified methamphetamine laboratory allegedly operated by a transnational drug trafficking network.

Marwa said five suspects were arrested during the operation, including a 56-year-old Mexican national, Jose Villa Ochoa, who was reportedly recruited to provide technical

expertise in the production of methamphetamine.

The other suspects were identified as Maxwell Uche Nevoh, 30; Olatunji Yusuf, 37; Bankole Akeem Owolabi, 45; and Ganiu Monsiu, 43.

According to Marwa, the involvement of a foreign national highlights the growing international dimension of illicit drug manufacturing and trafficking activities in Nigeria.

"The facility was a highly fortified and sophisticated clandestine methamphetamine laboratory operated by a transnational drug cartel," Marwa stated.

He further disclosed

that officials from the agency's Directorate of Forensic and Chemical Monitoring visited the site on June 18 to conduct a comprehensive forensic assessment of the laboratory and its surroundings following the raid.

The NDLEA said investigations are ongoing to unravel the full scope of the operation and identify other members of the suspected drug syndicate.

The agency reaffirmed its commitment to intensifying the fight against illicit drug production, trafficking, and abuse across the country.

Foreign News

France Warns Even Young People's Health At Risk As Europe's Heatwave Shifts East

After days of record-breaking temperatures in France, officials have warned people to adjust their behaviour, with Health Minister Stéphanie Rist saying there were risks to young people as well as the elderly.

Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu said the health alert level was being raised to its highest, to boost hospital staffing and protect the vulnerable.

Heatwave conditions that have left Spain, the UK and France sweltering for days are set to shift to the east, with forecasters in Germany and the Czech Republic warning of extreme conditions.

Temperatures in Germany could hit 40°C in some western and south-western areas on Thursday, and across the country on Friday. An extreme weather warning is now in place in much of the Czech Republic.

United Nations climate change chief Simon Stiell has said "Europe's savage heatwave has the fingerprints of the climate crisis all over it", and he has called for "a faster shift to

renewables, protecting forests and boosting climate resilience".

After France recorded its hottest day on Wednesday, June 24, for the second day in a row, records continue to be broken. Météo-France said the average minimum temperature reached 22C on Wednesday night. Nantes saw 27.2C in the north-west.

France's health minister said "young people are also suffering from cardiac arrests". The ambulance service in Paris had seen four times more cardiac arrests than normal over a 24-hour period, said Rist, while stressing there were no confirmed figures for the number of deaths linked to the heatwave.

Paris mayor Emmanuel Grégoire, said the mortality rate was on the rise in the capital.

"We must not believe we are invulnerable," he told French TV. "I am thinking especially about the youth... At about 19:30 last night... I saw 100 or so joggers on the street. Frankly, that's irresponsible."

"It's fine to take a couple of days off from exercising," he added.

Stéphanie Rist said everyone had to adjust their personal activity to the high temperatures: "Even if you are young and in good health with no underlying medical issues, this heat will affect you too."

Even cycling came with risks, she warned, from high temperatures that lasted a week, as people

would start feeling faint and might fall and even end up in hospital.

In a bid to ease pressure on the capital's hospitals, Parisians will also be restricted from drinking alcohol in public from noon on Friday until 07:00 on Saturday. Licensed bars and restaurants are exempt.

Bans on takeaway alcohol sales will also be in effect from 18:00 on Friday until 07:00 on Saturday.

Both restrictions will be in place during the same hours from Saturday to Sunday.

Speaking to local media, Paris police chief Patrice Faure said: "We are reaching a saturation point in hospital facilities."

Meanwhile, a three-year-old child has been found dead in a car in the Paris region, days after two young children were

found dead in the family's car in the southern town of Carpentras.

In the north-western city of Rennes, the head of the Accident and Emergency department Professor Louis Soulas linked the deaths of five or six people in their homes in the region to the extreme temperatures.

Emergency services had gone to check in on them after they had failed to pick up their phones during welfare calls, said Soulas: "It's not just the very elderly; it's people aged 60 and up."

Iran Shows Trump That Making Peace Is Not Easy

Making peace with Iran could be just as hard as fighting a war.

US Vice President JD Vance recently met with Iranian officials in Switzerland to turn a temporary peace deal into a permanent agreement. Vance said the talks went well and that some progress was made, but there are still many difficult issues to solve.

The temporary deal, signed by President Trump in France recently stopped the fighting, reopened the

Strait of Hormuz, and promised Iran economic benefits if it agrees never to develop nuclear weapons. However, important questions—such as what will happen to Iran's nuclear program and its enriched uranium—still need to be settled during the next 60 days of talks.

The biggest achievement of the agreement is that it has stopped direct fighting between the United States and Iran.

Former US national

security official Philip Gordon said the ceasefire is likely to continue because it benefits both countries. Iran can start earning millions of dollars every day from oil exports again, while the United States wants to avoid another war.

Qatar and Pakistan, which helped bring both sides together, said the talks were positive and that both countries agreed on a plan to reach a final deal within 60 days. Vance also said Iran had agreed to allow international nuclear

inspectors back into the country.

Even so, the peace process is already facing challenges. Iran is trying to improve its bargaining position and has claimed to shut the Strait of Hormuz. Trump responded by warning Iran of possible military action and said its negotiating team might not return home safely. At the same time, growing tensions between Israel and Iran over Lebanon are putting the peace efforts at risk.

Entertainment

Tenkobo Blasts Mr Ibu's Widow Over Online Appeal For Financial Help

Nigerian comic actor Fred Ebere, popularly known as Tenkobo, has criticised Stella Maris Okafor, the last wife of the late Nollywood veteran John Okafor, widely known as Mr Ibu, for seeking financial assistance from the public.

Stella Maris recently appeared in a video shared by Nigerian influencer King Mitchy, where she appealed for help, saying she was struggling to pay her house rent and her children's school fees. The video quickly went viral and attracted mixed reactions from Nigerians.

Reacting to the video, Tenkobo, who was a close colleague and family friend of the late actor, accused Stella Maris of using Mr Ibu's name and popularity to attract sympathy and financial support. He claimed that her public appeal created the impression that the late actor left nothing behind for his

family.

Tenkobo alleged that Mr Ibu made wise investments during his lifetime, including buying houses and landed properties. He questioned what happened to

those assets, accusing Stella Maris and other family members of selling the properties after the actor's death. He challenged them to explain how the money from those sales was spent.

He also argued that being the wife of a famous actor should not stop someone from working or learning a skill. According to him, if Mr Ibu had not been a celebrity, Stella Maris would still have needed to find a way to support herself and her children.

Sharing details of a phone conversation with Mr Ibu's first son, Valentine Okafor, Tenkobo said the conversation left the family emotionally affected. He explained that his relationship with the late actor went beyond being colleagues, describing Mr Ibu as a father figure and close friend.



Stella Maris

YCee Opens Up About Six-Year Battle With Mental Health

Nigerian singer and rapper, Oludemilade Martin Alejo, popularly known as YCee, has spoken openly about his long battle with mental health. The music star revealed that he was diagnosed with a mental health condition in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Speaking in a recent episode of the Afropolitan podcast, YCee said the diagnosis forced him to take a break from music as he focused on his recovery. He explained that the experience was one of the most difficult periods of his life.

According to the rapper, he was living in London when he was diagnosed. He spent six months in the United Kingdom and was admitted to the hospital times without number, spending about three months receiving treatment. Due to the type of visa he was on, he later returned to Nigeria to continue his medical care.

YCee said adjusting to mental health treatment in Nigeria was challenging. He described the past six years as a difficult journey filled with hospital admissions, medication, and regular therapy sessions.

Nancy Isime Shares Why She Is Not Sure About Having Children

Nollywood actress, model, and TV host Nancy Isime, has shared her opinion on having children, saying she is not sure if she wants to become a mother.

Speaking on the Thanks For Coming podcast, Nancy said she loves children, but believes that loving them can also mean choosing not to bring them into a

world where people face many problems and struggles.

When asked how many children she would like to have, the actress said the difficulties of life make her think carefully about becoming a parent. According to her, the world can be a tough place, and that has influenced the way she sees parenthood.

"You know the craziest

thing about loving children? I feel like if you really love children, you wouldn't want to bring them into the world," she said.

Nancy explained that many people are dealing with different challenges every day, and she

sometimes wonders if it is fair to bring children into such a situation.

"Are you not suffering today? Have you not seen me today? Is earth not ghetto? Are you not going through a lot? Don't you wish some days that you

were not born?" she asked.

Her comments have generated reactions online, with many people sharing different views on raising children, the challenges of life, and whether today's world is the right place to start a family.



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FULL PAGE COLOUR	₦ 350,000.00	17,500	26,250	393,750
FULL PAGE BLACK & WHITE	₦ 300,000.00	15,000	22,500	337,500
HALF PAGE COLOUR	₦ 250,000.00	12,500	18,750	281,250
HALF PAGE BLACK & WHITE	₦ 200,000.00	10,000	15,000	225,000
QUARTER PAGE	₦ 150,000.00	7,500	11,250	168,750
CHANGE OF NAME	₦ 7,000.00	350	525	7,875



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Feature

The Fallacy Of Economic Man

By Kingsley Moghalu

Nigeria stands today at a moment of both promise and peril. The current administration's macroeconomic reforms—unification of exchange rates, removal of fuel subsidies, and efforts to stabilize the naira and attract foreign direct investment—have created a fragile degree of macroeconomic stability but not (yet), despite the best intentions, transformative outcomes in reality. For all the intellectual firepower of Nigerian economists, the size of our domestic market, our entrepreneurial dynamism, and the abundance of human and natural resources, the country has not achieved the structural transformation that would place it on a sustainable path to shared prosperity. Manufacturing still contributes only about 7-10 percent to GDP. Youth unemployment remains alarmingly high. Debt service obligations consume a crushing proportion of government revenues. Poverty affects over 100 million citizens. Per capita income growth has stagnated even as aggregate GDP figures struggle upward but can't seem to cross an invisible barrier. Why?

The answer, I submit, lies in a profound intellectual and policy fallacy: the dominance of the concept of "economic man," or "Homo Economicus". This idealized figure—a perfectly rational agent who acts purely in self-interest to maximize personal utility, possesses complete information about all options and outcomes, enjoys unlimited cognitive capacity, maintains stable preferences, and always chooses the option yielding the highest net benefit—has been the foundational assumption of classical and neoclassical economics since the 19th century.

This model has been exported to developing countries through Washington Consensus policies of liberalization, privatization, and minimal state intervention promoted by the IMF and World Bank. There certainly is a place and context for economic man. So I am not advocating socialism. But, in contexts like Nigeria's, it has proven not merely

incomplete but actively harmful. It assumes strong institutions, perfect information, and rational actors insulated from historical, cultural, and political realities—conditions that do not obtain. Real human beings operate under "bounded rationality", cognitive biases, and social influences, as demonstrated by the work of the Nobel Laureates Herbert Simon, Daniel Kahneman, and Richard Thaler. In environments marked by institutional fragility, information asymmetries, ethnic diversity, colonial legacies, and elite capture, narrow self-interest frequently manifests as rent-seeking, primitive accumulation, and predatory extraction rather than productive investment and wealth creation.

The result in Nigeria has been policy that sounds theoretically sound but delivers disappointing outcomes: rapid liberalization without institutional adequate levels of industrialization led to deindustrialization and import dependence; an obsession with aggregate GDP growth masked per capita stagnation and deepening inequality; subsidies and welfare interventions in a structurally weak fiscal state exacerbated debt vulnerabilities without building productive capacity; and a rentier political economy, fueled by oil revenues, perpetuated elite bargains over nation-building. Despite periodic reforms and world-class economic minds, transformational outcomes have remained elusive because the underlying model misdiagnoses the problem and prescribes the wrong medicine.

True economic transformation and the wealth of nations in African countries like Nigeria must instead be anchored on three interconnected pillars that directly challenge the assumptions of Homo Economicus.

The first is competent governance and sound institutional foundations that create the enabling environment for genuine prosperity. Markets do not exist in a vacuum; they require security of life and property, an independent central bank and an efficient judiciary that

enforces contracts and upholds the rule of law, transparency and accountability mechanisms that curb corruption, and a meritocratic civil service capable of consistent, long-term policy implementation. Without these, even the most elegant economic models collapse under implementation failures, policy reversals, infrastructure deficits, and elite capture.

Resource-rich contrasts illuminate the point. Botswana, at independence in 1966 one of the world's poorest countries, discovered massive diamond deposits and through prudent management—forming the transparent Debswana 50:50 joint venture, channeling revenues under sustainable budgeting principles, establishing the Pula Fund, and maintaining low corruption and strong democratic institutions rooted in visionary leadership—achieved upper-middle-income status and broad-based progress. Nigeria's oil experience, by contrast, fueled Dutch Disease, deindustrialization, corruption, volatility, and environmental degradation and poverty because governance and institutional quality lagged. Norway's Government Pension Fund Global, now exceeding \$2 trillion, invests petroleum revenues abroad under strict transparency and ethical guidelines. Its Handlingsregelen fiscal rule limits structural non-oil deficits to the expected real return (~3%), ensuring intergenerational equity and shielding the economy from shocks through meritocratic bureaucracy and broad consensus. Nigeria's Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA—an acronym I coined at a fiscal-monetary planning meeting on the wealth fund in the boardroom of the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2012 or so), managing around \$3 billion, is a positive step but remains under-scaled. These examples demonstrate decisively that governance determines whether resources become a blessing or curse. Nigeria must build pockets of effectiveness in key agencies, reform the civil service for meritocracy and insulation from politics, strengthen judicial independence, and entrench transparency so that self-interest is channeled toward productive ends.

News

NYCN Holds Thanksgiving Service For Judicial Victory

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru and Nzeuzor Jane

Members of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), led by its President, Amb. Sukubo Sara-IgbeSukubo, today (Sunday June 28, 2026), held a special thanksgiving service at Salvation Ministries, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, to appreciate God for the recent court victory that reaffirmed the council's leadership.

The thanksgiving service, attracted members of the National Executive Council, Board of Trustees, National Advisory Council, state chairmen, traditional rulers and other stakeholders of the apex youth body from across the country.

Ministering during the service, the Founder and Presiding Pastor of Salvation Ministries, Pastor David Ibiyeomie, charged Christians to cultivate the habit of expressing gratitude to God in all circumstances, stressing that everything people possess comes from God.

According to him, thanksgiving is the key to divine increase and continuous blessings.

"Always show gratitude to God in all things. Whatever you have was given to you by God in the first instance. God will always increase thanksgiving," Pastor Ibiyeomie declared.

Speaking at the event, the NYCN President, Amb. Sukubo Sara-IgbeSukubo, said the thanksgiving service was organised to return all glory to God following the council's recent judicial victory, in which the court nullified the Corporate Affairs Commission's (CAC) deregistration of the organisation and ordered the reinstatement of its duly recognised national executives.

He noted that the judgment restored the Sukubo-led executive, bringing an end to the legal dispute over the leadership and legal status of the National Youth Council of Nigeria.

Sukubo reaffirmed the commitment of his leadership to advancing the interests and welfare of Nigerian youths through responsible, purposeful and inclusive leadership.

Also speaking, the NYCN Chairman, Abia State Chapter, Comrade Sylvanus Smith Onyenaturuchi, described the court judgment as a divine intervention, saying it underscored God's faithfulness to the council.

"It is a victory from God for the apex youth body in Nigeria, and we do not take it for granted. That is why members gathered from across the nation and beyond to return all the glory to God Almighty for this uncommon feat," he said.



**ABIA STATE GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE HONOURABLE COMMISSIONER
MINISTRY OF LANDS**

Ref: MOL/COMM/IV/109

Subject: PUBLIC NOTICE

Date: June 11, 2026

This is to inform all persons who were allocated plots of land at the Government Station Layout, Uzuakoli, by the Abia state Government, to immediately present their Allocation Papers and all other relevant documents relating to their plots to the Ministry of Lands, Umuahia, for verification and regularization.

All affected allottees are required to comply within fourteen (14) days from the date of this publication.

Please note that failure to present the required documents within the stipulated period may result in the loss of the allocation, and Government reserves the right to re-allocate such plots without further notice.

For enquiries, please visit the Ministry of Lands, Block "A, Workers Secretariat, Ogurube Layout, Umuahia.

Signed:
ESV. Mong N. Uduma
State Director of Lands

For:
The Honourable Commissioner
Ministry of lands,
Abia State.

Joseph Jacob

 JosephJACOB1914
 070361698671


Creative Writers Hangout

Dear Step-mother (6)

Uche woke before dawn. For a few confused seconds, he forgot where he was. The unfamiliar ceiling above him, the soft hum of central heating, and the pale grey light filtering through the curtains felt strange compared to the noisy mornings back home in Nigeria where roosters crowed before sunrise and generators hummed through the streets.

Then reality returned. He recalled that he was in Scotland, to play football in Rangers academy.

He sat upright slowly and glanced outside the window. Thin fog hovered over the training pitches, and tiny droplets of rain clung stubbornly to the glass. A few players were already jogging lightly around the fields in black training kits despite the cold.

The discipline amazed him. Players and coaches follow strict schedule come rain come shine.

After dressing in the academy-issued tracksuit, neatly folded beside his bed, Uche made his way downstairs. The corridors smelled faintly of fresh coffee and laundry detergent. Somewhere in the distance, he could hear muted laughter and the clinking of plates from the cafeteria.

Breakfast was quiet but lively in its own way. Young players from different countries sat in groups, speaking Spanish, French and English languages. Some nodded politely at him while others studied him curiously – the new Nigerian player everyone had heard about.

Uche kept mostly to himself, eating scrambled eggs, toast, fruit, and porridge while trying not to appear nervous.

At exactly eight o'clock, Alistair McKenna entered the cafeteria holding a tablet under one arm.

"There you are," he said after spotting Uche. "Medical day. Come along."

The words tightened something inside Uche's stomach. He followed Alistair through another wing of the facility into the sports science and medical department. Unlike the warmth of the players' residence, this part of the building felt clinical and precise. White walls gleamed beneath bright lights. Machines beeped softly behind closed doors. Staff members in navy uniforms moved

efficiently from room to room carrying clipboards and digital tablets.

"This academy invests heavily in player health," Alistair explained while walking. "Before anybody touches the pitch competitively, we need to know exactly how the body works."

They stopped outside a room labeled PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT LAB.

Inside, a bald middle-aged doctor with glasses greeted him warmly. "Good morning, Uche. I'm Dr. Malcolm Reid."

The doctor's Scottish accent was softer than Alistair's but still heavy enough that Uche had to focus carefully.

The first examination seemed simple: Height. Weight. Body measurements.

Uche removed his trainers and stood against a digital measuring board while an assistant recorded everything carefully. His height, arm span, leg length, and body fat percentage were entered into a computer system.

"You've got excellent natural athletic proportions," Dr. Reid remarked while studying the numbers. "Long stride potential."

That single compliment lifted Uche's confidence slightly.

Next came flexibility and mobility testing.

In a spacious room with padded flooring, physiotherapists guided him through stretches designed to assess the movement of his hips, knees, ankles, shoulders, and spine. They watched every motion carefully.

"Touch your toes."

"Lunge forward."

"Rotate left."

"Again."

One physiotherapist crouched near him, observing the alignment of his knees during squats.

"Tight hamstrings," she murmured while making notes. "But nothing concerning."

Afterward came cardiovascular testing.

This part frightened Uche more than he expected. He was fitted with a heart-rate monitor strapped tightly around his chest and placed on a high-performance treadmill surrounded by screens displaying numbers he barely understood. A transparent breathing mask covered his nose and mouths, making him feel briefly trapped.

Dr. Reid stood nearby watching calmly.

"The machine measures oxygen consumption, lung capacity, endurance efficiency, and how your heart responds under stress," he explained.

The treadmill began slowly. Then faster. And faster. Within minutes, sweat rolled down Uche's forehead despite the cold environment. His breathing grew heavier inside the mask. The incline increased gradually until his legs burned violently.

"Keep going," one assistant encouraged.

The sound of the machine filled the room as Uche pushed himself harder. Every muscle screamed. His chest rose and fell desperately while numbers flashed across the monitors beside him.

Finally, after one final exhausting sprint, the treadmill slowed.

Uche bent forward with both hands on his knees, gasping for breath while staff members studied the results with visible interest.

"Very impressive recovery rate," Dr. Reid said eventually. "Explosive endurance profile."

Next came strength and power testing. Uche performed vertical jumps on a force plate that measured leg power output. Sensors tracked how high he leapt and how quickly he landed.

Then came sprint testing, across an indoor track lined with laser timing gates. Each sprint felt like an audition. Every movement analyzed. Every weakness exposed.

Still, Uche felt something awakening inside him – determination.

The academy was not merely searching for talent. It was measuring potentials scientifically.

Later in the morning, he underwent muscle scans and injury assessments. Ultrasound equipment checked old strain areas around his thighs and calves. His ankles were examined carefully for ligament stability. Doctors asked detailed questions about previous injuries, illnesses, nutrition, sleep habits, and training background in Nigeria.

One young physiotherapist looked genuinely surprised.

"You trained mostly on gravel pitches?"

Uche nodded.

She exchanged glances with another staff member.

"That explains the ankle resilience."

By afternoon came the most intimidating part: the cardiac screening.

Electrodes were attached across his chest while he lay shirtless on a medical bed. Machines traced the electrical rhythm of his heart across glowing monitors. Then he underwent an echocardiogram where cold gel spread across his chest as doctors scanned his heart using ultrasound imaging. The room remained unusually quiet during this process. For a brief moment, anxiety gripped him. What if something was wrong? What if his dream ended before it truly began?

But eventually Dr. Reid smiled reassuringly. "Strong heart," he said simply. "Very strong."

Relief flooded through Uche so quickly he nearly laughed.

The final stage involved nutrition and psychological evaluation.

A nutritionist discussed meal plans, hydration levels, supplements, and muscle recovery. She explained how the cold climate and intense training schedule would demand more calories than he was used to consuming back home.

Then came a sports psychologist who spoke gently with him about pressure, adaptation, homesickness, and mental resilience.

"What scares you most?" she asked at one point.

Uche hesitated, "Failing," he admitted quietly.

The psychologist nodded as though she heard that answer every day.

When the exhausting series of examinations finally ended, evening had already settled outside. Rain tapped softly against the academy windows again while floodlights illuminated the training grounds in ghostly white.

Alistair met him near the corridor.

"So," the older man asked, "still standing?"

Uche smiled tiredly, "Yes, sir."

Alistair chuckled deeply, "Good. Because tomorrow," he said, placing a hand on Uche's shoulder, "the football begins."

Will they be impressed with Uche's performance when the football begins? Find out in our next publication.

AUTHOR of the WEEK Machado de Assis

Machado de Assis was one of the greatest literary figures in Brazilian history. He was born on June 21, 1839, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His full name was Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis. Though he was born into a poor family, he rose through determination and intelligence to become one of the most respected writers in the Portuguese-speaking world.

Machado de Assis came from humble beginnings. His father was a house painter, while his mother worked as a washerwoman from the Azores Islands. He lost his mother at an early age, and his difficult childhood exposed him to poverty and hardship. Despite these challenges, he developed a deep love for books and learning.

Unlike many famous writers of his time, Machado de Assis did not receive extensive formal education. Much of his knowledge came from self-study. He worked in printing shops and bookstores where he spent time reading literature, philosophy, and languages. Through hard work, he taught himself French and English, which later influenced his writing style.

Machado de Assis began his literary career as a poet and journalist. He published poems and articles in newspapers while still a young man. His early writings reflected Romanticism, the popular literary movement of that period. However, as he matured, his style evolved into realism and psychological fiction.



One of the major turning points in his career came with the publication of *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* in 1881. The novel was unusual because it was narrated by a dead man reflecting on his life. The book displayed Machado's wit, irony, and deep understanding of human behavior, qualities that later became trademarks of his writing.

Another important work by Machado de Assis was *Dom Casmurro*, published in 1899. The novel tells the story of Bentinho and Capitu and explores themes such as jealousy, betrayal, and memory. Many readers and scholars still debate whether Capitu was truly unfaithful, making the book one of the most discussed novels in Brazilian literature.

Machado de Assis was also instrumental in the development of Brazilian literary culture. In 1897, he became the founding president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters. The academy was created to promote literature and preserve the Portuguese language in Brazil. He remained its president until his death.

Despite his success, Machado de Assis struggled with health problems throughout his life. He suffered from epilepsy and often experienced emotional difficulties. However, he continued writing and producing literary works that reflected deep insight into society, politics, and the complexities of the human mind.

Machado de Assis was admired for his unique writing style. His novels often contained irony, humor, and psychological depth. Rather than focusing only on action, he explored the thoughts, emotions, and weaknesses of his characters. This made his works timeless and relevant even many years after his death.

Machado de Assis died on September 29, 1908, in Rio de Janeiro. Today, he is regarded as Brazil's greatest writer and one of the finest authors in world literature. His works continue to be studied in schools and universities across the globe, inspiring generations of readers and writers with his brilliance and creativity.

Sporting Ambassador



Abia Govt to Renovate Umuahia Township Stadium, Considers Establishment of Sports Development Zone

By Joseph Jacob

The Abia State Government has announced plans to renovate the Umuahia Township Stadium to ensure that sporting activities and athlete development in the state are not disrupted while work progresses on the proposed Umuahia Stadium City Project, which is expected to be flagged off before the end of the year.

The disclosure was made by the Abia State Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobilor Nwadinma Ananaba, during a strategic meeting with the chairmen and secretaries of the state's 35 sports associations. The meeting was held at the Bishop Nwaedo Banquet Hall along BCA Road, Umuahia.

Speaking during the interactive session, the Commissioner revealed that the state government is also considering the

materials. He noted that the initiative would not only accelerate sports development in the state but also create employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth.

Sir Ananaba further disclosed that a bill aimed at enhancing sports funding in the state is currently being considered. When passed into law, the legislation is expected to provide a more sustainable framework for financing sporting activities and addressing the perennial challenge of inadequate funding.

The Commissioner assured all sports associations of the government's commitment to supporting their activities. He, however, urged them to intensify grassroots development programmes, identify and nurture young talents, and explore sponsorship opportunities to complement government efforts.

development.

"All the associations must be united to ensure the accomplishment of government goals in sports development," he stated.

In her address, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Sports and Youth Development, Pastor Jane Maxwell Igwe, expressed appreciation to the chairmen and secretaries for accepting the responsibility of



Abia State Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobilor Nwadinma Ananaba, speaking during the event.



Group photograph after the event

establishment of a Sports Development Zone. According to him, the proposed zone will provide a tax-free environment for manufacturers to produce sports kits, equipment and related

He emphasised the need for unity among the various associations, stressing that collaboration and teamwork would be essential in achieving the administration's vision for sports

inspiration from the Scriptures, she reminded participants of the importance of proper planning, noting that even Jesus Christ taught the necessity of counting the cost before embarking on any project.

Earlier, the Director of Sports, Comrade Obioma George, highlighted the numerous responsibilities entrusted to the sports associations and urged both chairmen and secretaries to approach their duties with dedication, commitment and professionalism. He particularly challenged the secretaries to be proactive, describing them as indispensable to the success of their respective associations.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for the chairmen of the various associations to

present their development roadmaps to the Commissioner. In his presentation, Mr Okoro outlined key objectives, including grassroots basketball development, increased participation of women in the sport, talent identification programmes and the provision of standard training and competition facilities across the state.

Similarly, the Chairman of the Abia State Badminton Association, Mr Abel Sunday, highlighted the association's achievements, including the successful hosting of two international competitions in the previous year. He disclosed

preparing for the Commonwealth Games, a development he attributed to the association's sustained efforts in athlete development. He further announced plans to organise an Open Powerlifting Championship in August.

The meeting concluded with renewed optimism among stakeholders, as participants described the engagement as another significant step towards strengthening sports administration and aligning the activities of the associations with the present administration's vision for sustainable sports development



Cross-section of the chairmen and secretaries during the event

that the association aims to have 5,000 badminton players, 500 para-badminton athletes and 100 qualified badminton coaches in Abia State by the year 2030.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the Powerlifting Association, Mr John Nwosu, revealed that Esther Nwogu and Onyinyechi Mark are currently in the national camp

in Abia State.

The interactive session underscored the government's commitment to creating an enabling environment for sports to thrive while encouraging associations to take greater responsibility for the growth and success of their respective disciplines.



Abia State Basketball Association Chairman, Victor Ifeanyi Okoro discussing with the secretary, Stanley Adindu.

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Abia State Basketball Association Embarks on Hostel Construction Project

By Joseph Jacob



Construction in progress

The Abia State Basketball Association has commenced the construction of a hostel at the Umuahia Township Stadium to provide a conducive camping facility for basketball players preparing to represent the state at various competitions.

The Director of Sports, Comrade Obioma George, disclosed this during an

interactive session between the Chairmen and Secretaries of the 35 sports associations and the Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobilor Nwadinma Ananaba, held at the Bishop Nwaedo Banquet Hall, BCA Road, Umuahia.

When completed, the hostel will accommodate up to 240 players and provide a conducive environment for training, rest, and personal development. The facility will feature a fully equipped gymnasium where athletes can build strength,

improve fitness, and enhance their overall performance.

The hostel will also include modern conveniences and separate accommodation blocks for male and female players, ensuring comfort, privacy, and security for all residents.

Presenting the Association's roadmap for basketball development in the state, the Chairman of the Abia State Basketball Association, Mr Victor Ifeanyi Okoro, who also serves as the National Technical Director of the Nigerian Basketball Federation, revealed that the hostel project is progressing steadily. He noted that the Association has already organised a successful 3x3 Open Championship and has developed a comprehensive year-round programme aimed at making basketball the most popular sport in Abia State after football.

Mr Okoro emphasised that women's basketball would receive unprecedented attention under the new development plan. According to him, the Association intends to organise girls-only competitions, provide scholarship opportunities for talented female players,

encourage the development of female coaches, and host women's basketball tournaments across the state.

He further disclosed that basketball academies would be established to create elite development pathways for talented young players through structured training, education, mentorship, and exposure to high-level competitions. Special focus will be placed on establishing regional academies in the three senatorial zones of the state, supported by holiday camps and talent identification programmes.

Highlighting the importance of grassroots development, Mr Okoro stated that basketball

programmes would be introduced in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, as well as community centres, churches, and youth clubs. The initiative will cater for various age categories, including Under-10, Under-13, Under-16, and Under-18 players. Emphasis will be placed on teaching the fundamental s of the game, including dribbling, shooting, passing,

footwork, physical fitness, discipline, and teamwork. Mr Okoro also informed the Commissioner that plans are underway to renovate existing school courts, install portable hoops, repair outdoor facilities, and transform available community spaces into functional basketball centres. The long-term objective, he said, is to ensure that every local government area in Abia State has at least one standard basketball court.

The ambitious development programme underscores the Association's commitment to grassroots development, talent discovery, infrastructure expansion, and the overall growth of basketball in Abia State.



Mr. Victor Ifeanyi Okoro Chairman Abia State Basketball Association

SUDOKU

Puzzle By: Prince Blessing Lazarus

	8			3		4		
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		6		4			2	

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