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"Uplift the people, project the nation"

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Otti Vows To Make Abia Nigeria's Clean Energy Hub

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to making the state Nigeria's clean energy hub by leveraging its electricity regulatory powers to attract and ongoing power sector reforms renewable energy investment

Governor Otti stated this recently, in Umuahia, while receiving the leadership of the Rural Electrification Agency (REA), the Presidential Initiative on Compressed Natural Gas and Electric Vehicles (Pi-CNG & EV), and the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI), who visited the state to explore investment opportunities in renewable energy, clean transportation and housing.

The governor said Abia, being among the first states to establish an electricity regulatory agency, was well placed to lead Nigeria's transition to cleaner and more sustainable energy solutions.

He noted that the state's assumption of electricity distribution responsibilities from the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) would significantly improve investor confidence and accelerate the deployment of renewable energy projects.

Governor Otti assured the visiting agencies that his administration would respond promptly to their proposals, promising that all submissions would receive government attention within 14 days to fast-track implementation.

The governor said that renewable energy remained central to the state's transport strategy, disclosing plans to power the new bus terminals with solar energy and electric vehicle charging infrastructure instead of fossil fuels.

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Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti (1st right), and the Speaker of the Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Emmanuel Emeruwa (2nd right), alongside other dignitaries, during the commissioning of 20 additional electric buses for the Green Shuttle fleet at the Nnenna Otti Bus Terminal, Umuahia, recently.

Governor Otti Unveils 20 Additional Electric Buses

• Orders Traffic Agencies To Operate Till 10pm

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

The Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has commissioned an additional 20 electric buses for the Abia Green Shuttle Service, expanding the state's clean energy-

powered public transport fleet and delivering on his administration's pledge to build a modern, affordable transportation system for residents.

The commissioning of the new buses increased the state's electric bus fleet to

40, following the launch of the first batch of 20 buses in December 2025.

The expansion is expected to improve commuter mobility, extend the reach of the Abia Green Shuttle Service to more destinations within and

outside the state and reinforce the government's commitment to clean energy and efficient public transportation.

Speaking during the ceremony, recently, at the Nnenna Otti Bus Terminal in Umuahia, Governor Otti

said the initiative underscores his administration's determination to provide affordable, efficient and environmentally sustainable public transportation for residents.

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Tinubu, Atiku, Obi, Utomi, Groups, Differ On Nigeria's Recovery Path

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

Nigeria's economy, security situation, governance structure, and future direction have remained central issues in national discourse, with political leaders, economists, and civil society groups offering different perspectives on the country's challenges and possible solutions.

While the Federal Government maintains that its reforms are laying the foundation for long-term economic recovery, critics argue that

the policies have increased hardship and require urgent measures to cushion their impact on citizens.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has defended his administration's economic reforms, including fuel subsidy removal, foreign exchange reforms, revenue mobilisation, infrastructure development, investment drive, and social intervention programmes.

The President said, the measures were necessary to address longstanding structural problems and reposition Nigeria for

sustainable growth. The administration has pointed to improved fiscal capacity, increased investment interest, and ongoing reforms across critical sectors as signs of progress.

However, critics have raised concerns over rising food prices, inflation, transportation costs, and declining purchasing power among Nigerians.

Former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, now associated with the African Democratic Congress (ADC), has criticised the current economic direction, arguing that urgent steps are needed to tackle poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and declining living standards.

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EDITORIAL:

2027: Fair Play And The Future Of Nigeria's Democracy

News

Otti Unveils 20 Additional Electric Buses

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The governor who described transportation as a catalyst for economic prosperity, explained that the decision to adopt electric vehicles was driven by the need to reduce operating costs, protect the environment and position Abia ahead of private sector participation in the transition to cleaner energy.

He noted that the buses were designed with larger cargo compartments and facilities for persons living with disabilities to improve accessibility and service delivery.

Governor Otti, who listed offences such as beating traffic lights, driving against traffic, overloading and indiscriminate parking as behaviours that would no longer be tolerated, warned that motorists found violating traffic regulations would face stiff sanctions.

The Governor directed the Abia State Road Traffic and

Safety Management Agency and the Harmonised Task Force to extend their operations until 10 p.m. daily, including weekends, as part of measures to strengthen traffic management and improve public safety.

Governor Otti while adding that an independent monitoring team would be established to assess compliance with the directive, also warned that acts of sabotage, vandalism and other criminal activities against public transport assets would attract severe consequences.

He recalled that the first set of electric buses was inaugurated by the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, in December 2025, saying the latest rollout fulfilled the administration's promise to continually expand the fleet.

The governor appealed to residents to fulfil their tax obligations, pointing out that

sustained revenue generation is essential to maintaining critical infrastructure and delivering improved public services.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Transport, Dr Chimezie Ukaegbu had described the commissioning as another significant milestone in the state's transport transformation agenda.

Dr. Ukaegbu said the additional buses would expand inter-city and intra-city operations and provide workers, students and other residents with safer, more affordable and comfortable transportation.

The commissioner noted that the state government had complemented the expansion of the fleet with investments in charging infrastructure, maintenance systems and route planning to ensure efficient service delivery.

He added that the adoption of electric buses would contribute to cleaner air

by eliminating tailpipe emissions and position Abia as a leader in sustainable public transportation.

Dr Ukaegbu assured residents that the buses would be professionally managed and properly maintained, while urging drivers to uphold discipline and observe all road safety regulations.

He commended the Governor Otti led administration for choosing to build the future rather than merely manage the present through bold investments in modern transportation.

The event was attended by the MD/CEO of the Rural Electrification Agency, Abba Abubakar Aliyu, the Executive Chairman of the Presidential Initiative on CNG and Electric Vehicles, Barr. Ismael Ahmed and the MD/CEO of the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI), Dr. Armstrong Takang, among other dignitaries.

Abia, Seven Other States Get New Commissioners of Police

Abia State and seven other states have been assigned new Commissioners of Police following a nationwide redeployment approved by the Police Service Commission (PSC) and effected by the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Olatunji Rilwan Disu.

The redeployment, announced in a statement by the Force Public Relations Officer, CSP AniNiedu, is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen operational efficiency, improve leadership across commands and strategic formations, and consolidate reforms within the Nigeria Police Force.

Under the new postings, CP Afolabi Wilfred Olutokumbo has been deployed as the Commissioner of Police for Abia State.

Other state commands affected include Plateau, where CP Ayodeji Faniyan takes charge; Bayelsa, CP Saka Adewale Ajao; Cross River, CP Ajo Geoffrey Ordue; Anambra, CP Nanna Oji Ama; Edo, CP Patrick Daaor; Jigawa, CP Tani Murtala; and Delta, CP Samuel Erale.

The redeployment also covers several strategic departments and formations at the Force Headquarters, Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), Force Intelligence Department (FID), Department of Training and Development (DTD), Police Academy (POLAC), and the Police Staff College.

Among the officers assigned to key national positions are CP Yemi John Oyeniyi (Force Intelligence Department), CP Charles Ezekwesiri Dike (INTERPOL, FCID), CP Taiwo A. Adedeji (Counter Terrorism Unit), CP Uduaklta Otu (Anti-Human Trafficking, FCID Annex, Lagos), and CP Abdullateef Ajape Yusuf (General Investigation, FCID, Abuja).

Others redeployed include CP Bolanle Aremu, CP Rita Oyintare Oki, CP Nelson Nwamana, CP Mohammed Hassan Ahmed, CP Akingbade C. Adeyinka, CP Iya Umar Mohammed, CP Darma Nuhu Na'aliyu, CP Mohammed Yakubu, and CP Danbaba Mohammed Labbo, who have been assigned to various administrative, investigative, training, welfare, and operational responsibilities across the country.

The Inspector-General of Police urged the newly deployed commissioners to justify the confidence reposed in them by promoting intelligence-led policing, enhancing operational effectiveness, upholding professionalism, and strengthening community engagement in their respective areas of responsibility.

Culled from NAN

Change Of Name

I, formerly known and addressed as Oseni Sandra Ogheneniyole, now wish to be known and addressed as EJIM S A N D R A OGHENENIYOLE. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note.

EJIM SANDRA OGHENENIYOLE.

Tinubu, Atiku, Obi, Utomi, Groups, Differ On Nigeria's Recovery Path

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Atiku has called for people-centred policies, stronger institutions, transparency in governance, fiscal discipline, and greater devolution of powers through restructuring to promote effective governance and economic development.

He maintains that Nigeria's challenges are not due to lack of resources but poor leadership choices, weak institutions, and ineffective management of national assets.

Former Anambra State Governor and presidential candidate, Mr. Peter Obi, has continued to advocate a shift from a consumption-driven economy to a production-based one.

Obi said Nigeria must prioritise investment in education, healthcare, agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and human capital development. He has also expressed concerns over insecurity, unemployment, rising living costs, and what he described as wasteful public spending.

According to him, the success of government should be measured by improved living conditions, job creation, and poverty reduction.

Political economist and former presidential candidate, Prof. Pat Utomi, has identified leadership failure and weak institutions as major factors behind Nigeria's development challenges.

Utomi argued that Nigeria's problem is not a lack

of resources but the inability to build strong systems that promote accountability, competence, innovation, and sustainable development. He has advocated reduced cost of governance, institutional reforms, and a new political culture based on service and integrity.

Meanwhile, civil society organisations, including the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project

(SERAP), BudgIT, Enough is Enough (EiE) Nigeria, Yiga Africa, and the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room have continued to demand greater transparency, accountability, credible elections, stronger institutions, and improved citizen participation.

Despite their differing perspectives, major voices in the national debate agree that Nigeria must urgently address

insecurity, economic hardship, unemployment, infrastructure deficits, and governance challenges.

As the country moves towards the 2027 general elections, the debate remains focused on the leadership approach, economic policies, and institutional reforms needed to build a prosperous and stable Nigeria.

Otti Vows To Make Abia Nigeria's Clean Energy Hub

Contd. from Page 1

"I want to take the bus terminal off the grid and power it with solar in order to charge all our electric vehicles without burning diesel or petrol and that is how we can maximise carbon credit opportunities", he said.

According to the governor, the technology, mapping and data presented by the agencies would not only strengthen electricity access but also support industrial revival, infrastructure planning and security operations across the state.

He reiterated his administration's readiness to work closely with the agencies to identify practical areas of collaboration and proposed Aba as an ideal location for a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) facility because of its commercial strength and high transportation demand.

On housing development, the governor stressed the need for affordable mortgage financing to address the state's housing deficit, noting that

prevailing commercial lending rates has made home ownership unattainable for many Nigerians.

He directed the Commissioner for Housing and officials of the Ministry of Finance Incorporated to work with the promoters on ongoing housing estates as well as the proposed International Village project.

Describing the proposals as consistent with his administration's development agenda, Governor Otti said the proposal "is like music to our ears because it aligns with what we are already doing".

Earlier, the Managing Director of the Rural Electrification Agency, Dr. Abba Aliyu, had disclosed that the agency was implementing a \$750 million renewable energy programme expected to unlock \$1.1 billion in private sector investment for the deployment of 1,350 mini-grids across Nigeria.

Aliyu, however, expressed concern that Abia had attracted only about six mini-

grid projects despite signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the agency and urged the state to reposition itself to secure a larger share of the available funding.

He said the agency had already mapped communities, public institutions and electricity demand across Abia and called on the state government to facilitate approvals for interconnected mini-grids, encouraging indigenous renewable energy developers to access available financing for rural electrification.

Also speaking, the Executive Chairman of the Presidential Initiative on Compressed Natural Gas and Electric Vehicles, Mr Ismael Ahmed, said the initiative was established to provide sustainable transport alternatives following the removal of fuel subsidy by the Federal Government.

Ahmed explained that the programme was harnessing Nigeria's abundant natural

gas resources and promoting electric mobility to reduce transportation costs and carbon emissions.

He urged the Abia State Government to establish a Clean Mobility Steering Committee, appoint a state focal person and develop a clean mobility policy that would position the state as a regional hub for CNG and electric vehicles.

To support the initiative, Ahmed pledged the donation of five CNG buses, three electric buses and a gas station to strengthen the state's public transport system.

He also promised to facilitate private investment in CNG infrastructure and electric vehicle charging stations and urged the state to participate in the Clean Mobility Investment Forum and take advantage of the Federal Government's long-term asset financing programme for buses, tricycles and vehicle conversion to cleaner energy.

News

August Women's Meeting: Abia First Lady Promotes Women's Empowerment In Ukwia West

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

The Wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, has reaffirmed the state government's commitment to empowering women through sustainable economic, agricultural, and entrepreneurship programmes aimed at improving the lives of women across the state.

Mrs. Otti made this known at the 2026 Ukwia West August Women Meeting held at Obheie School premises. The First Lady was represented by the Wife of the Deputy Governor, Mrs. Adaeze Emetu.

She described Ukwia West as a unique local government area in Abia State because it is the state's only crude oil-producing council.

However, she stressed that the area's greatest strength is not its oil but the resilience, hard work, and determination of its women.

Mrs. Otti praised the women of Ukwia West for their important contributions to agriculture, family welfare, and community development.

She said the theme of this year's August Meeting, "Abia Women Empowered to Thrive," reflects the government's vision of creating more opportunities for women to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

Mrs. Otti noted that investing in women is one of the best investments any society can make, adding that this belief continues to guide the programmes of her office and the Safe Tent Care Initiative.

Speaking on agriculture, Mrs. Otti recalled the recent distribution of fertiliser to rural women farmers across the state. She assured participants that the support would be expanded through the provision of improved seedlings, quality farm inputs, financial assistance, and other practical measures to increase food production and improve household incomes.

She also urged genuine farmers to register in the ongoing farmers' registration exercise. According to her, the Abia State Government's Farmers Support Programme is already assisting more than 18,000 farmers across the state's 17 local government areas with improved agricultural inputs.

Beyond agriculture, she said her office has continued to empower women through skills acquisition programmes, start-up equipment, financial support, and entrepreneurship initiatives under the Safe Tent Care Initiative and the Ahima Women Economic Empowerment Programme. She said these programmes have helped thousands of women establish and grow successful businesses.

Mrs. Otti assured the women that the state government would continue to invest in their growth by creating more opportunities, providing relevant skills, and giving them the support needed to succeed.

She also thanked Governor Alex Otti for his confidence in the ability of Abia women, saying his leadership has created new opportunities and restored hope to thousands of women across the state.

In her address, the wife of the Mayor of Ukwia West Local Government Area, Mrs. Diddy Dike, described the August Meeting as more than a social and cultural gathering. She said it is a celebration of the strength, resilience, wisdom, and great potential of Abia women.

Mrs. Dike noted that the theme, "Abia Women Empowered to Thrive," highlights the need to equip women with the knowledge, skills, opportunities, and resources required to become agents of positive change in their families and communities.

She commended Mrs. Priscilla Otti for her compassionate leadership and unwavering commitment to the welfare and empowerment of women, saying her various initiatives have continued to improve the lives of women across Abia State.

Mrs. Dike encouraged participants to use the August Meeting to strengthen unity, promote peace, support one another, mentor younger women, and contribute to the development of Abia State.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the Planning Committee, Mrs. Pamela Edith Ebere, said the exhibitions, discussions, and cultural displays organised for the event would inspire women to take bold steps toward a future where every woman in Abia has the opportunity not only to survive but also to thrive.

In his remarks, the Mayor of Ukwia West Local Government Area, Pastor Dike Nwankwo, reaffirmed the commitment of Governor Alex Otti's administration to implementing inclusive policies, strategic interventions, and people-oriented programmes that will continue to uplift and empower women across Abia State.



The newly built and furnished administrative complex of the Nigerian Air Force in Umuahia completed and officially handed over to the Nigerian Air Force by the Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti.

Otti Hands Over Administrative Complex to Nigerian Air Force

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State, has commissioned and handed over a fully furnished Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Administrative Complex in Umuahia to the Nigerian Air Force, saying the project will strengthen security in Abia State and the South-East.

The modern facility was built and furnished by the Abia State Government. It will serve as the administrative headquarters of the Nigerian Air Force in the state.

The complex has an auditorium, registry, clinic, armoury, kitchen, canteen, conference hall, commander's office,

administrative offices, gatehouse, guard room, quarter guard and observation posts.

Speaking during the handover ceremony recently, Governor Otti said the project was another important step in his administration's efforts to protect lives and property.

He added that it showed the benefits of co-operation between the Federal Government and state governments.

The governor said the facility would provide the Nigerian Air Force with the support it needs to carry out its duties effectively in the state.

According to the governor, the arrival of the Nigerian Air Force in Abia fulfilled a long-standing

dream and completed the presence of the three Armed Forces in the state, alongside the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Barracks in Ohafia and the Nigerian Navy College of Accounts and Finance in Owerrinta.

"This is another bold step towards ensuring that every part of Abia remains safe from all forms of security threats.

"Security is very important for development, and our administration will continue to invest in programmes that protect the lives and property of our people," he said.

Governor Otti thanked President Bola Tinubu and the Chief of the Air Staff for supporting the establishment of the Nigerian Air Force in Abia.

He assured the Air Force of the state's continued support and revealed that the government had set aside 120 hectares of land at the proposed Abia Airport in Nsulu for the construction of a permanent Air Force base.

He said work on the base would begin after the airport runway is completed. He also disclosed that temporary accommodation had been provided for Air Force personnel in Umuahia.

The governor added that his administration would also partner with the Nigerian Air Force in education and human capital development, in addition to security.

Abia Head Of Service Urges Civil Servants To Embrace Hard Work, Excellence

By Ndubueze Ngozi

The Head of Service in Abia State, Mr. Benson Ojeikere, has called on civil servants in the State to embrace hard work, productivity, innovation and personal responsibility as essential qualities for building a more efficient and effective public service.

Ojeikere gave the advice during a mentorship session, where he encouraged officers to remain committed to excellence, continuous learning and improved performance.

He said these values are important to support the ongoing reforms and transformation of the Abia State Public Service.

According to him, effective service delivery can only be achieved through commitment, discipline and dedication. He reminded civil servants that public service is not only about earning a salary but also about serving the people and making

meaningful contributions to the growth and development of Abia State.

The head of service said every responsibility assigned to a public servant is an opportunity to make a positive difference. He therefore urged officers to carry out their duties with honesty, integrity, accountability and a strong sense of responsibility.

Ojeikere also encouraged civil servants to improve their knowledge and skills through regular training and continuous learning. He advised them to learn from experienced professionals and embrace new ideas and modern ways of working that will improve efficiency, productivity and service delivery.

He noted that promotion and career advancement are based on hard work, competence and consistent performance. He warned that officers who fail to perform their duties diligently would be held accountable in line with the Public Service Rules.

The Head of Service further urged workers to take advantage of training and professional development opportunities provided by the government. He expressed confidence that a motivated, disciplined and well-trained workforce would help the state achieve its development goals.

Ojeikere reaffirmed the

commitment of the Abia State Government to building a modern, responsive and people-oriented public service. He called on all civil servants to support the vision of the present administration by carrying out their responsibilities with dedication, professionalism and excellence.

Corrigendum

We sincerely regret the incorrect captioning of the photographs (Page 1 and Page 11), in our last newspaper publication, which was captioned, 'Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi, first son of Nigeria's former Head of State, Major-General Johnson Thomas Umuunnakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi.

The person wrongly captioned as Aguiyi-Ironsi, first son, was the Minister of Defence, Lt-Gen Christopher Gwabin Musa (retd).

We acknowledged those regrettable errors and sincerely apologize to Lt-Gen Christopher Musa (retd), Mr. Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi, their families and our esteemed readers for the misrepresentation.

The management of Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Publishers of the National Ambassador, Umuahia, deeply regret the errors and inconveniences or embarrassment they may have caused.

News

60th Birthday: Abia Governor Hails Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu As "Amazon From The East"

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State has felicitated with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, on the occasion of her birthday, describing her as "an amazon from the East" whose courage, integrity and distinguished record of public service have earned her recognition as a valuable asset to the Igbo nation, Nigeria and the international community.

Governor Otti made the remarks in a birthday message issued on Wednesday by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Ferdinand Ekeoma.

The Governor who extolled the minister's contributions to public service and diplomacy, noted that the former Nigerian Ambassador to Spain has excelled in various fields of human endeavour. He recalled Ambassador Ojukwu's support during the political movement that culminated in his emergence as Governor of Abia State, noting that she stood by the struggle for the state's redemption from the period he first contested the governorship election on the platform of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA).

Governor Otti further described the minister as an honest, just and courageous Nigerian who has represented womanhood with dignity and distinction. "On a day like this, I feel

excited to celebrate my sister and friend, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, on the occasion of her birthday.

"She is a woman of strong will and courage. An amazon from the East who has distinguished herself in many facets and continues to prove that, with courage and character, nothing is too big for any human being to accomplish", Governor Otti said.

The governor also commended the minister's performance since her appointment to the Federal Executive Council, saying her commitment and achievements within a relatively short period in office were already evident. According to him, Ambassador Ojukwu has continued to demonstrate exceptional leadership and remains a huge asset to the Igbo nation, Nigeria and the international community. Governor Otti urged her to continue to uphold the virtues, courage, integrity and character that have distinguished her throughout her public life and earned her widespread admiration.

He further assured the minister of his continued support as she pursues greater accomplishments in national service.

The governor, on behalf of his family, the Government and people of Abia State, wished Ambassador Odumegwu-Ojukwu a happy birthday and prayed for God's continued blessings, good health and many more years of impactful service.



Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Dr. Emmanuel Meribole.

Otti Reaffirms Support For Abia's Cultural Heritage

Stories by Ngozi Ndubueze

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to preserving and promoting the state's rich cultural and historical heritage as part of efforts to make Abia a leading destination for education, tourism, and cultural preservation.

Governor Otti gave the assurance while receiving a delegation of directors from the National Museum Commission, Abuja, who were in the state to inspect Government College Umuahia as part of the process for its proposed inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Represented by the

Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Dr. Emmanuel Meribole, the Governor described the initiative as timely and in line with his administration's vision of improving education, protecting historical landmarks, and promoting tourism.

He assured the delegation of the Abia State Government's full support and cooperation throughout the inscription process, expressing confidence that the partnership would achieve positive results.

Governor Otti also said his administration is making major investments in infrastructure and public institutions across the state. He encouraged the team to visit other tourist attractions and historical sites in Abia to

see the development taking place under his administration.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Tourism, Culture and Creative Economy, Mr. Matthew Ekwuribe, said the ministry has been working closely with the National Museum Commission on the renovation of the National War Museum and the Ojukwu Bunker.

He explained that the inspection followed a request by the Government College Umuahia Old Boys Association for the school to be recognised as a national heritage monument and considered for UNESCO World Heritage status.

Also speaking, Mr. Ugochukwu Okoroafor said Abia is richly blessed with

cultural and historical assets. He commended Governor Otti for his strong commitment to preserving and promoting the state's heritage.

The leader of the delegation, Mr. Chukwudi Onwudinanti, said the team was in Abia to assess Government College Umuahia as part of the evaluation process for its proposed designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The visit featured presentations showcasing Abia's tourism potential and historical landmarks. It was attended by the Permanent Secretary, Office of the Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Godwin Okezu, alongside other senior government officials and key stakeholders.

Abia Restates Commitment To FG Smart School Initiative

The Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti has reaffirmed his administration's unwavering commitment to the successful implementation of the Federal Government's Smart School Initiative.

Governor Otti stated this when he received the Universal Basic Education Commission Ministerial Committee on Smart School who paid him a courtesy visit as part of the Committee's two-day assessment of the UBEC Smart School at Umuajuju in Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area.

The governor represented by the Secretary to the state Government, Dr. Emmanuel Meribole, described the initiative as a

strategic intervention which aligns with the state's education transformation agenda aimed at equipping learners with 21st-century digital and technological skills.

He commended the Federal Ministry of Education and the Universal Basic Education Commission for championing technology-driven education through the smart school initiative.

He further noted that the programme perfectly complements the state government's vision of expanding access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education across both urban and rural adding that the present administration is

constructing 20 Smart Schools strategically located across the State.

In his remarks, the Commissioner for Basic and Secondary Education, Elder Goodluck Ubochi, described the UBEC Smart School Initiative as being in perfect alignment with the Abia First Education Programme of the present administration.

He noted that the State Government has already commissioned two state-owned Smart Schools, Ogbo Central Smart School, Uba Kala, and Umuomaiukwu Smart School as part of deliberate efforts to revolutionize teaching and learning through digital innovation.

Earlier, the Dean of

SUBEB Chairmen and Chairman of the UBEC Ministerial Committee on Smart Schools, Prof. Shehu Adaramaja had said the Committee was constituted by the Federal Ministry of Education to assess the level of completion of Smart Schools, evaluate their operational readiness, identify challenges, engage critical stakeholders and recommend measures to ensure the effective take-off of the initiative nationwide by September.

He commended Governor Otti for his remarkable investment in education and the far-reaching reforms, describing the state as one of Nigeria's leading states in educational transformation.



Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu

Editorial

2027: Fair Play And The Future Of Nigeria's Democracy

As Nigeria prepares for the 2027 general elections, the success of the democratic exercise will depend largely on early preparation, institutional independence, political maturity, and a firm commitment to fairness by all stakeholders. Elections are not events that begin and end with voting day; they are processes built through months of planning, consultation, public education, and strict adherence to established rules.

The credibility of the 2027 elections will therefore be determined long before Nigerians walk to the polling units. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), as the nation's electoral umpire, has a crucial responsibility to commence comprehensive preparations early enough to guarantee a transparent, peaceful, and credible process.

INEC must strengthen its systems, improve logistics planning, ensure continuous voter education, review operational strategies, train election personnel, and maintain effective communication with political parties, security agencies, civil society organisations, traditional institutions, and the media. The commission must also continue to build public confidence by ensuring that electoral rules are clearly communicated and applied fairly to all participants.

One major lesson from previous elections is that inadequate preparation often creates avoidable challenges. Issues relating to logistics, technology, voter understanding, and election management can undermine public confidence if not properly addressed. Early engagement with critical stakeholders will help identify potential challenges and develop solutions before election day.

Beyond the responsibility of INEC, there is an urgent need for nationwide voter sensitisation. Democracy cannot thrive where citizens lack adequate knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. Nigerians, especially young voters who constitute a significant portion of the electorate, must be continuously educated on peaceful participation, the importance of voting, and the dangers of electoral violence and misinformation.

A politically informed electorate is a major pillar of credible democracy. Voter education should not be treated as a last-minute activity during election periods but as a continuous national responsibility involving INEC, the media, schools, civil society groups, and community

leaders.

However, the greatest test of Nigeria's democracy ahead of 2027 will be the commitment of political actors to fair play. Democracy is strengthened when all political parties are allowed to compete freely, present their programmes, mobilise supporters, and seek the mandate of the people without intimidation or unnecessary restrictions.

At both the federal and state levels, those in authority must recognise that democratic power is temporary and belongs ultimately to the people. State institutions, security agencies, and public resources must remain neutral and must not be used to provide undue advantage to any political party or candidate.

A democracy where opposition voices are suppressed, political activities are restricted, or institutions are perceived as serving partisan interests cannot deliver sustainable development. The strength of democracy lies in its ability to accommodate different opinions, encourage competition, and allow citizens to freely choose their leaders.

The ruling party has a responsibility to provide leadership by example, while opposition parties must also demonstrate commitment to democratic values. Political competition should be based on ideas, competence, integrity, and solutions to national challenges rather than personal attacks, violence, or misinformation.

Opposition parties must present credible alternatives, respect electoral laws, and contribute positively to national conversations. Democracy requires responsibility from both those in government and those seeking power.

The media, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders also have critical roles in protecting the integrity of the electoral process. The media must uphold professionalism, fairness, and accuracy in election reporting, while civil society groups should continue to promote transparency, accountability, peaceful participation, and citizen engagement.

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria's democracy has survived several challenges. Although imperfections remain, democracy remains the most effective system for peaceful transfer of power, citizens' participation, accountability, and national development.

A credible 2027 election will not only determine political leadership but also shape Nigeria's democratic future and global reputation. Countries with strong democratic institutions attract investment, encourage innovation, and create stability necessary for economic growth.

Nigeria's democracy must therefore be protected beyond political interests. Early preparation by INEC, continuous stakeholder engagement, respect for electoral rules, and commitment to fairness by all actors will determine whether the 2027 elections become a milestone in democratic progress.

Fair play is not merely an electoral requirement; it is the foundation upon which trust, stability, and national development are built. Nigeria belongs to all its citizens, and protecting democracy remains a collective responsibility.

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

Rising Use Of Hard Drugs Among Young People Calls For Urgent Action

Dear Editor,

I am writing through your widely read newspaper to express my deep concern about the growing use of hard drugs among young people in our state. This problem is becoming more serious every day and is destroying the lives of many youths who should be working towards a better future.

Today, it is common to see young people abusing hard drugs on our streets and in many communities. What used to be a rare problem has now become a major social challenge. Many promising young men and women are becoming addicted to these dangerous substances, causing them to lose interest in their education, jobs, businesses, and future goals.

Drug abuse does not only affect those who use the drugs. It also brings pain to families, increases crime, and makes our communities less safe. Many parents are worried because they are watching their children become addicted and lose their sense of direction. Some young people have dropped out of school, while others have turned to stealing, violence, and other criminal activities because of drug addiction.

If nothing is done, the situation will continue to get worse. More young people will become victims of drug abuse, and the future of our state will be at risk. No society can make progress when a large number of its young people are trapped in addiction.

I respectfully appeal to the Governor to treat this issue as a matter of urgency. The government should work closely with security agencies, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), schools, parents, religious organisations, traditional rulers, and community leaders to fight drug abuse. There should also be regular public awareness campaigns to educate young people about the dangers of hard drugs.

The government should also provide more rehabilitation and counselling centres where those struggling with drug addiction can receive treatment and rebuild their lives. At the same time, people involved in the sale and distribution of illegal drugs should be arrested and prosecuted according to the law.

Parents also have a major role to play. They should pay closer attention to their children, know the friends they keep, and guide them with love, care, and discipline. Schools, churches, mosques, and community groups should continue to teach good values and encourage young people to stay away from drugs.

Our young people are the future of our state. We must do everything possible to protect them from the dangers of hard drugs before more lives are destroyed. I sincerely hope this appeal will receive the urgent attention it deserves so that together we can build a safer and healthier future for our youths.

Ifeanyi Ogidi
From Umuahia.



Abuja Digest

with Sophina Ovuike
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Public Awareness Crucial Over Nigeria's Foreign Policy Objectives - Enikanolaiye

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sola Enikanolaiye, has called for a more robust public diplomacy strategy to highlight the achievements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Nigerian Technical Aid Corps (NTAC), saying increased public awareness is crucial to advancing Nigeria's foreign policy objectives.

The minister made the call in Abuja while receiving the Director-General of NTAC, Hon. Yusuf Buba Yakub, and members of the agency's management team during a courtesy visit.

Ambassador Enikanolaiye said that despite the significant contributions of the Ministry and NTAC to Nigeria's international relations and development cooperation, many citizens remain unaware of their activities.

He stressed the need for a deliberate and well-funded communication strategy to improve the visibility of the Ministry's programmes and NTAC's interventions.

"We need to do more to let Nigerians know what the Ministry and NTAC are doing. Our achievements deserve greater visibility, and we must strengthen our media engagement," he said.

The minister described the relationship between the Ministry and NTAC as one of close institutional partnership, noting that stronger collaboration would enhance the implementation of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda and the Federal Government's 4-D Foreign Policy doctrine of Democracy, Development, Demography and Diaspora.

He also commended the leadership of NTAC for sustaining the agency's programmes despite financial challenges, describing its performance as commendable.

Earlier, Hon. Yakub, had said the agency was established in 1987 as Nigeria's flagship technical assistance programme to promote South-South Cooperation by deploying skilled Nigerian professionals to developing countries.

He explained that the agency provides technical expertise to partner countries across Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific under bilateral agreements, with volunteers serving two-year assignments in sectors such as education, healthcare, engineering, agriculture, information and communications technology, and public administration.

Yakub disclosed that more than 10,000 Nigerian professionals have been deployed to over 40 countries since the agency's inception, contributing to capacity building and institutional development in beneficiary nations.

He highlighted some of the programme's achievements, including the appointment of an NTAC volunteer to lead Sierra Leone's COVID-19 response, while several former volunteers have gone on to occupy senior academic and leadership positions in foreign institutions.

The Director-General also announced the expansion of the programme into the Caribbean following President Tinubu's recent visit to St. Lucia, where a new Technical Aid Agreement was signed.

According to him, Grenada and St. Kitts and Nevis have now joined the list of active partner countries, while technical cooperation with Jamaica, Rwanda, Seychelles and Zanzibar has been revived.

He said 274 Nigerian professionals are currently serving in 13 partner countries in fields including medicine, nursing, education and other specialised disciplines.

Yakub further disclosed that discussions are at an advanced stage to establish new technical cooperation agreements with Zambia, Ethiopia, Angola, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados to further strengthen Nigeria's diplomatic engagement.

He reaffirmed the agency's commitment to advancing Nigeria's foreign policy through technical cooperation, knowledge transfer, sustainable development and stronger bilateral relations.

Also speaking, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Dunoma Umar Ahmed, called for the adoption of digital solutions to improve NTAC's operations.

He recommended the creation of a digital database of Nigerian professionals, expansion of virtual technical assistance, stronger engagement with the diaspora, results-based monitoring and evaluation, youth-centred technical diplomacy and increased collaboration with partner countries.

The meeting reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to strengthening Nigeria's global influence through effective public diplomacy, strategic partnerships and the deployment of Nigerian expertise to support sustainable development across partner nations.

2027: Labour Party Asks Opposition Parties, Groups To Adopt Its Platform

The Labour Party (LP) has urged opposition political parties, groups and movements seeking to unseat the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in the 2027 general elections to adopt its platform, arguing that it already possesses the nationwide structure needed to secure electoral victory.

In a statement, signed by the party's National Publicity Secretary, Ken Asogwa, dated August 2, 2026, and made available to newsmen, the party maintained that the Labour Party remains the strongest and most organised opposition platform in the country.

According to the

statement, while the party supports efforts aimed at fostering opposition unity, such collaboration would be more productive if all interested groups aligned with the Labour Party instead of forming new political platforms or loose alliances.

The party said its longstanding relationship with the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), both institutional members of the Labour Party, gives it a unique grassroots network that cuts across the country.

It noted that serving and retired civil servants, many

of whom belong to the organised labour movement, provide the party with a presence in virtually every polling unit, ward and local government area nationwide.

The Labour Party argued that this extensive reach places it in a stronger position than any other political party, including the APC, to mobilise support ahead of the 2027 elections.

The statement also highlighted the party's organisational strength, active membership and what it described as a credible presidential candidate with the competence, experience and leadership capacity to

address Nigeria's socio-economic and governance challenges.

The party warned against abandoning what it called its established institutional advantages in favour of creating another coalition platform, insisting that such a move could weaken the opposition's chances.

It therefore appealed to opposition stakeholders to rally behind the Labour Party, stressing that building on an existing national platform would be more strategic than establishing a new political structure.



The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Sola Enikanolaiye (middle), and the Director-General of the Nigerian Technical Aid Corps (NTAC), Hon. Yusuf Buba Yakub (9th left), alongside other officials, during the NTAC management team's courtesy visit to the Minister in Abuja, recently.

FG Reaffirms Commitment To Women's Empowerment, Family Development

The Federal Government has reiterated its commitment to advancing women's economic empowerment and strengthening family systems as part of efforts to promote inclusive development under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

The Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajiya Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, stated this while receiving the National President of the Police Officers' Wives Association (POWA), Chief Mrs. Olufunmilola Mutiat Disu, and members of her delegation during a courtesy visit to the ministry in Abuja.

The minister said the current administration has created greater opportunities for women through policies and programmes aimed at expanding economic inclusion and improving family welfare.

Describing the present period as "Women O'Clock," she said it reflects a new era in which women are encouraged to pursue their aspirations, achieve economic independence and make greater contributions to national development.

According to her, the Ministry remains committed to ensuring that every Nigerian woman, regardless of

social or economic background, has access to opportunities that will improve her livelihood and overall well-being.

Sulaiman-Ibrahim noted that the Renewed Hope Agenda prioritises women's empowerment by creating enabling policies, strengthening institutions and expanding access to resources that promote entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods.

She commended POWA for its contributions to the welfare of police families through its POWA CARES Initiative, which focuses on education, healthcare, economic empowerment and social support.

The minister called for closer collaboration between the Ministry and the association to deliver more impactful programmes for women, children and families within police communities and across the country.

She also highlighted key government interventions, including the Nigeria for Women Programme Scale-Up and the Renewed Hope Social Impact Intervention (RH-SII-774), which are designed to improve women's access to finance, enterprise development, agriculture, digital technology, renewable energy and other income-generating

opportunities.

Sulaiman-Ibrahim further reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to strengthening legal and institutional measures against sexual and gender-based violence while promoting responsible parenting, family values and community participation as essential pillars of national development.

Earlier, the National President of POWA, Chief Mrs. Olufunmilola Mutiat Disu had praised the Minister for her dedication to improving the welfare and protection of Nigerian women and families.

She said the association, through its POWA CARES Initiative, continues to provide scholarships, healthcare services, economic empowerment programmes and welfare support for police families across the country.

Chief Mrs. Disu disclosed that, in partnership with the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the association secured a 200,000-dollar Master's Scholarship Programme for five children of police officers.

She added that POWA plans to expand its intervention programmes to all 36 states of the federation through stronger collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

Special Interview

The Uncommon Transformation Of The Abia's Health Sector – Dr. Azodo

Dr. Ngozi Azodo, a former Director in the Federal Ministry of Health and Special Adviser to the Abia State Governor on Health, speaks on the transformation of the state's health sector under Governor Alex Otti's administration.

In this special interview with Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation crew led by Mazi. Jones Nnanna Ike, the Editor, Deacon Chukwuemeka Egejuru, the News Editor, Mr. Okechukwu Ubani, and other members of the editorial team, she discusses the challenges inherited by the administration, key achievements, healthcare workers' migration, digital health, nursing education, emergency medical services, health insurance, manpower development and the government's vision for quality healthcare delivery in Abia.

Excerpts:

What was the condition of Abia's health sector before the current administration took office?

We inherited a health system characterised by poor infrastructure, inadequate manpower, unpaid salaries, industrial disputes and deteriorating healthcare facilities. Many Primary Health Centres had become overgrown with weeds, while some training institutions had lost accreditation.

The government responded by declaring a state of emergency in the health sector. This enabled us to address outstanding obligations, engage health unions, improve workers' welfare, restore accreditation, renovate facilities, recruit qualified personnel and reposition the sector for effective service delivery.

What would you consider the most significant achievements recorded in 2026?

It is difficult to isolate just three because the interventions are interconnected. When the administration came into office, infrastructure had deteriorated, healthcare workers were demoralised, institutions had lost accreditation and many facilities were barely functional.

The declaration of a state of emergency provided the impetus for comprehensive intervention. We engaged healthcare workers, improved their welfare, renovated facilities, restored accreditation and rebuilt confidence in the system.

The transformation we are witnessing is therefore the result of several interventions working together.

How far has the renovation of Primary Health Centres progressed?

Our assessment showed that many Primary Health Centres had become virtually unusable, with some overgrown by vegetation after years of neglect.

We commenced phased renovation across the state's 184 wards. With support from development partners, including the World Bank, additional facilities are being constructed and upgraded.

Beyond renovation, we are equipping the facilities and deploying qualified healthcare workers to ensure they provide meaningful services.



The Special Adviser to Abia state Governor, Dr. Ngozi Azodo, (Right), and the General Manager, Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Mazi Jones Nnanna Ike (Left), during an interview in Umuahia recently.

How is the government ensuring that renovated facilities remain functional?

Renovation alone is not enough. Facilities must have manpower, equipment and proper management.

The government has recruited more than 800 healthcare workers and is improving their welfare and working conditions. We are also strengthening healthcare management and ensuring that facilities have the equipment and personnel required to function.

Community participation is equally important. Community leaders are engaged before projects are undertaken, while communities are encouraged to take ownership and protect the facilities after completion.

The College of Nursing Sciences has regained accreditation. Why is this significant?

Nigeria has transitioned from the old Schools of Nursing system to Colleges of Nursing Sciences under reforms by the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria.

Abia has embraced this transition by upgrading its nursing institutions into a multi-campus College of Nursing Sciences. The restoration of accreditation strengthens nursing education, increases training capacity and enables the state to produce more qualified nurses to address the healthcare workforce shortage.

The former Schools of Nursing have therefore been transitioned into the Abia State College of Nursing Sciences, operating a multi-campus system in line with national policy.

How is the government addressing healthcare workers' migration?

Healthcare workers' migration is not peculiar to Nigeria or Abia. It is a global phenomenon, and even developed countries experience movement of healthcare professionals across borders.

Nigeria currently loses some healthcare workers to countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, where they help fill manpower gaps.

We cannot completely stop migration, but we can reduce it by creating an environment where healthcare professionals are willing to stay. The state is addressing job satisfaction, working conditions, remuneration, security, career development, training opportunities and the broader economic environment.

One major area of focus is improving the work environment. When I assumed responsibility at the Ministry of Health, I discovered that some offices had operated for months without basic working

conditions. Healthcare workers cannot deliver effectively in such an environment.

The government is addressing infrastructure, power supply, equipment and other workplace needs. Abia has also adopted a health workers' salary structure aligned with the Federal Government's system.

Can the migration of healthcare workers be completely stopped?

No. Migration is a global reality and cannot be completely eliminated. However, we can reduce it by addressing the factors that influence workers' decisions to leave.

Some healthcare workers had already made up their minds to leave, while others were undecided or committed to staying. The critical group to focus on is those who are undecided. If we improve working conditions, remuneration, security and career development, many of them will choose to remain.

Does Abia have enough doctors and healthcare workers?

Abia currently has more than 900 doctors, contrary to some figures being circulated. However, we recognise that there is still a manpower gap.

Our approach is continuous recruitment and strategic deployment. We recruit healthcare workers, distribute them according to identified needs and continue the process of gradually closing the gaps.

The issue is not only the number of healthcare workers but also their effective deployment so that communities have access to quality healthcare services.

We are also strengthening healthcare training institutions, including the College of Nursing Sciences and the College of Medicine, with efforts to increase student intake and produce more qualified professionals who can serve Abia and beyond.

Does Abia meet global standards for healthcare manpower?

Rather than focusing solely on comparisons with global figures, our priority is continuously improving healthcare delivery.

We are expanding training institutions, increasing admission capacity, recruiting more personnel and upgrading infrastructure. The government understands the manpower challenge and is taking deliberate steps to address it.

What is the Abia Advanced Digital Health Project about?

The Abia Advanced Digital Health Project is designed to use technology to improve access to and management of healthcare services.

It will facilitate electronic management of patients' medical records, enable healthcare professionals to consult remotely and

improve service efficiency.

The initiative will reduce delays, improve patient management and expand access, particularly in underserved communities. It is being implemented in phases.

What does the Emergency Medical Services and Medical Transport System entail?

Emergency medical response is a critical component of modern healthcare.

The project is designed to establish an organised emergency response system supported by properly equipped ambulances, trained personnel and efficient referral mechanisms. The objective is to ensure that patients receive timely medical attention during emergencies.

The initiative aligns with the provisions of the National Health Act and is intended to strengthen emergency healthcare delivery across Abia State.

What is the progress of the Abia State Health Insurance Scheme?

The Abia State Health Insurance Scheme has made significant progress, with more than 200,000 registered beneficiaries.

Health insurance enables residents to access healthcare without bearing the full cost directly at the point of need. The ongoing digitalisation of the scheme will further improve registration, transparency and accessibility.

The scheme is open to everyone, including artisans, traders, transport operators and other informal-sector workers.

The government is encouraging cooperatives, community groups and associations to participate. This will expand risk pooling and enable more residents to benefit from affordable healthcare.

What is the government's broader strategy for strengthening secondary and tertiary healthcare delivery across State?

Abia State ably led by Governor Alex Chioma Otti is pursuing a comprehensive healthcare transformation anchored on the development of the Abia Medical City, a proposed advanced healthcare hub at Owerinta in Isiala Ngwa South. The project, planned on about 200 hectares with a proposed 1,000-bed hospital, is designed to provide highly specialised and quaternary medical services, promote medical tourism and reduce the need for residents to travel outside the state or country for complex treatment.

At the secondary-care level, the government is renovating, reconstructing, equipping and staffing general and cottage hospitals across the state to create a functional referral system between primary and tertiary healthcare.

Major interventions include facilities in Aba, Arochuku, Umuhie, Nkporo, Ikwanuo, Ohafia, Obingwa and other locations, while new hospitals are also being developed. The reforms are complemented by recruitment of healthcare workers, improved remuneration, biomedical equipment maintenance and stronger healthcare management structures.

To ensure equitable access to tertiary healthcare, the government is upgrading ABSUTH in Aba, Amachara Specialist Hospital in Umuahia, and

Umunato Specialist Hospital in Bende as major referral centres serving Abia South, Central and North Senatorial Districts respectively. The administration is targeting international standards, including JCI certification, while expanding specialist services and modern diagnostic capacity. Together with the Medical City, these investments are designed to create a structured healthcare system in which patients can access primary, secondary, tertiary and highly specialised care without unnecessary travel outside Abia.

What is being done to maintain medical equipment?

The government is training biomedical engineers and technicians in equipment maintenance and repairs.

There is little value in acquiring sophisticated medical equipment without the technical capacity to maintain it. Developing local expertise will reduce equipment downtime, minimise dependence on external repairs and improve the sustainability of healthcare investments.

How will the government sustain the achievements recorded in the health sector?

Sustainability is built into our healthcare interventions. Building facilities alone is not enough; they must be properly managed, equipped and staffed.

We are strengthening healthcare institutions and management structures, involving communities, training healthcare workers and ensuring that facilities have the resources needed to function effectively.

Citizens also have a role to play by protecting public investments and speaking up when they notice challenges.

Most importantly, we are building strong institutions and systems that can continue to function beyond individual officeholders.

How did you feel when Abia received recognition for its achievements in the health sector?

I felt honoured and appreciated because such recognition reflects the commitment of the government and the dedication of everyone working in the health sector.

It also underscores the importance of leadership. Governor Alex Otti's focus, persistence and commitment have contributed significantly to the transformation taking place in the sector.

What is your message to Abians on the ongoing reforms?

Every system rises or falls on leadership. The progress recorded in Abia's health sector has been made possible by Governor Alex Otti's commitment to rebuilding the healthcare system and by the dedication of healthcare workers and other stakeholders.

A lot has been achieved, but there is still work to be done. Our commitment remains to deliver quality, accessible and affordable healthcare to every resident of Abia State.

Transformation requires time, commitment and collective responsibility. Citizens must also protect public investments and support efforts to sustain the gains already recorded.

If we continue along this path, our objective is to build a healthcare system that is strong, accessible and sustainable for present and future generations.

Religion

King Ahab: A Warning Against Sin

By Okechukwu Ubani

A few nights ago, I was reading the story of King Ahab in the Bible, and it deeply touched my heart. It reminded me that the Bible is not just a book of history but God's guide for our daily lives. Every story in Scripture has a lesson for us, and the life of King Ahab is one that every Christian should read carefully. It teaches us about the danger of sin, the importance of obeying God, the power of true repentance, and the certainty of God's judgment. 1 Kings 16-22; 2 Kings 9

King Ahab, the son of Omri, became king of Israel. Sadly, instead of serving the Lord, the Bible says he did more evil in God's sight than all the kings before him. His greatest mistake was marrying Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon. Jezebel was a devoted worshipper of Baal, and she influenced Ahab to abandon the worship of the true God. Together, they built altars for Baal and led the people of Israel into idolatry. Instead of leading the nation closer to God, they led it into spiritual darkness. 1 Kings 16:29-33

Because of Ahab's wickedness, God sent the prophet Elijah with a message of judgment. Elijah declared that there would be no rain or dew except at God's command. For more than three years, the land experienced a severe drought. Crops failed, rivers dried up, animals died, and the people suffered greatly. This reminds us that when people reject God and choose sin, the consequences can affect families, communities, and even entire nations. 1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17-18

Later, God used Elijah to challenge the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal cried out from morning until evening, but nothing happened because Baal was powerless. Then Elijah

repaired the altar of the Lord, prayed a simple prayer, and God answered by sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. The people immediately fell on their faces and declared, "The Lord, He is God!" This miracle proved beyond doubt that there is only one true and living God. 1 Kings 18:20-39

One of the saddest events in Ahab's life was his greed for Naboth's vineyard. Naboth refused to sell his land because it was an inheritance from his ancestors. Instead of respecting Naboth's decision, Ahab became angry and depressed. Jezebel then arranged for false witnesses to accuse Naboth of blasphemy.

Naboth was unjustly executed, and Ahab took possession of the vineyard. But God saw everything. He sent Elijah to pronounce judgment on Ahab and Jezebel for their wickedness and abuse of power. 1 Kings 21:1-24

When Ahab heard God's judgment, he humbled himself. He tore his clothes, wore sackcloth, fasted, and mourned. Seeing his humility, God delayed part of the punishment until after Ahab's lifetime. This shows us that God is full of mercy and compassion. He is always willing to forgive those who sincerely humble themselves before Him. However, true repentance must be followed by a changed life. 1 Kings 21:27-29; Psalm 51:17

Unfortunately, Ahab did not completely turn away from his sinful ways. Later, he planned to go to war against Syria and asked his prophets whether he would succeed. Almost all of them told him what he wanted to hear. Only the prophet Micaiah spoke God's truth, warning Ahab not to go because he would die in battle. Rather than obey God's warning, Ahab chose to listen to pleasing words instead of the truth. 1 Kings 22:1-28

Thinking he could escape God's judgment, Ahab disguised himself before entering the battle. But no one can hide from God. During the fight, a soldier shot an arrow without aiming at anyone in particular, yet it struck Ahab between the joints of his armor. He bled throughout the day and eventually died, exactly as God had spoken through His prophet. After his death, God's judgment continued upon his family, and Jezebel later died just as Elijah had prophesied. God's Word never failed. 1 Kings 22:29-38; 2 Kings 9:30-37

The life of King Ahab teaches us that sin may seem attractive and successful for a while, but it always leads to destruction. Greed, dishonesty, pride, idolatry, injustice, and disobedience to God always have painful consequences. No amount of wealth, influence, or political power can protect anyone from God's righteous judgment. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Galatians 6:7-8

This story also teaches us to be careful about the voices we choose to listen to. Ahab rejected God's truth because he preferred prophets who spoke pleasant words. Today, many people also ignore biblical truth because they only want messages that make them feel comfortable. Yet God's truth is what leads to life, even when it corrects us. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32; 2 Timothy 4:3-4

Above all, the story reminds us that God sees everything. Nothing is hidden from Him. He is patient, loving, and merciful, but He is also holy and just. True repentance is not simply saying, "I'm sorry." It means turning away from sin, obeying God's Word, and living a life that pleases Him. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

The life of King Ahab is a serious warning to every generation. His story teaches us never to allow pride, greed, ungodly influence, or compromise to draw us away from God. Instead, we should remain faithful to Him, listen to His Word, stand for the truth, and obey His commandments every day. No matter the pressures around us, choosing God's way always brings peace, protection, and lasting blessings.

God is faithful to everyone who sincerely follows Him, and His promises never fail. As Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away" Matthew 24:35. May we learn from King Ahab's mistakes and choose the path of righteousness. A life of obedience to God leads to His favor, abundant life, and the hope of eternal glory.

 God is faithful to everyone who sincerely follows Him, and His promises never fail.



Family Matters

By Sandra Chibuiki

The wrong relationship doesn't just break your heart—it slowly steals your peace, confidence, and sense of identity.

Love is one of life's greatest gifts. At its best, it offers security, companionship, encouragement, and a safe place to grow. Yet not every relationship that begins with affection remains healthy. Some gradually become emotionally draining, mentally exhausting, and even physically dangerous. Sadly, many people don't recognize the warning signs until they have been deeply hurt.

The truth is that toxicity rarely appears overnight. It often starts subtly—with controlling behavior disguised as concern, criticism disguised as honesty, or manipulation disguised as love. Before long, what once felt comforting becomes suffocating.

Understanding the signs of a toxic relationship is not about becoming suspicious of everyone you love. It is about protecting your emotional well-being and making wise relationship choices.

What Is a Toxic Relationship?

A toxic relationship is one that consistently damages your emotional, mental, spiritual, or physical well-being. Instead of inspiring growth, mutual respect, and peace, it is characterized by unhealthy patterns

such as manipulation, disrespect, fear, control, dishonesty, or abuse.

Every couple experiences disagreements. However, healthy couples resolve conflicts with love and respect, while toxic relationships repeat harmful patterns without genuine change.

Warning Signs of a Toxic Relationship

1. You Are Constantly Criticized

Healthy partners correct with kindness and encouragement. Toxic partners regularly make you feel inadequate by criticizing your appearance, personality, dreams, achievements, or intelligence. Over time, this erodes your confidence.

2. Respect Is Missing

Love cannot flourish where respect is absent. If your opinions are ignored, your boundaries are violated, or your partner frequently embarrasses or insults you, the relationship is unhealthy.

3. Everything Must Go Their Way

A toxic partner often wants control over your friendships, clothing, finances, career, social media, or daily decisions. They may call it "protecting you," but genuine love does not seek to dominate.

4. You Live in Fear of Their Reactions

Do you carefully choose your words because you're afraid of triggering anger, insults, or

emotional withdrawal? Constant anxiety is not a sign of a healthy relationship.

5. Manipulation Has Become Normal

Manipulation may include guilt-tripping, emotional blackmail, silent treatment, gaslighting, or making you feel responsible for every problem. These behaviors gradually rob you of your confidence and clarity.

6. Trust Has Been Replaced by Suspicion

Excessive jealousy, constant accusations, checking your phone without permission, or monitoring your movements are not signs of deep love. They are signs of insecurity and unhealthy control.

7. The Relationship Is Emotionally One-Sided

You are always apologizing, always forgiving, always sacrificing, and always trying to fix things while the other person refuses to take responsibility.

Healthy relationships require equal commitment.

8. You Are Becoming Isolated

One of the most common characteristics of toxic relationships is isolation. Your partner discourages relationships with family, friends, mentors, or anyone who could offer support or wise counsel.

9. You No Longer Recognize Yourself

Perhaps the strongest warning sign is losing yourself. If you've become constantly anxious, unhappy, fearful, or emotionally exhausted, it's time to ask whether

the relationship is helping you grow or slowly destroying your peace.

Why Do People Stay?

Leaving a toxic relationship is often much harder than outsiders imagine. Many people remain because they:

Hope their partner will eventually change.

Fear loneliness.

- Feel financially dependent.

- Have low self-esteem.

- Worry about society's opinions.

- Are emotionally attached to the memories of how the relationship began.

These reasons are understandable—but they should never become excuses for accepting ongoing mistreatment.

What Should You Do?

Accept Reality

Don't minimize repeated unhealthy behavior or excuse it because of love. Love should never require you to ignore abuse.

Have an Honest Conversation

Where it is safe to do so, calmly communicate your concerns. A healthy partner accepts responsibility and is willing to grow.

Set Clear Boundaries

Boundaries are not walls that push people away. They are healthy limits that protect your dignity, peace, and emotional health.

Seek Wise Counsel

Speak with trusted family members, mature friends, pastors,

mentors, or professional counselors. Wise counsel often helps us see what emotions hide.

Prioritize Your Safety

If the relationship involves physical violence, threats, or severe emotional abuse, your safety comes first. Seek help immediately and remove yourself from danger.

Know When to Let Go

Not every relationship is meant to last, especially premarital relationships.

If someone continually refuses to change despite repeated opportunities, walking away may be the wisest decision you ever make.

Can Toxic Relationships Be Healed?

Yes, but only when both individuals genuinely acknowledge the problem, accept responsibility, and consistently work toward change. A relationship cannot become healthy if only one person is committed to healing.

Remember, promises without changed behavior are merely words.

Finally, a healthy relationship should make you feel valued, respected, safe, and inspired to become a better person. While no relationship is perfect, love should never leave you feeling worthless, fearful, or trapped.

Never mistake control for commitment, manipulation for affection, or suffering for proof of love.

Protect your peace. Guard your heart. Choose relationships that reflect mutual respect, kindness, honesty, and genuine care.

News

Kalu Advises Abia Youths To Become Good Leaders

By Ndubueze Ngozi

The President of the Abia State Youth Leadership Academy, Professor Kenneth Kalu, has encouraged participants of the first Abia Youth Leadership Academy Bootcamp to become good leaders who will make a positive difference in society.

Professor Kalu who spoke during the opening ceremony of the 2026 Abia Youth Leadership Academy Bootcamp held at Government College, Umuahia said the programme started three weeks ago with the application process and received 7,052 applications.

According to him, more than 1,000 young people were selected to take part in the leadership training.

Professor Kalu explained that the bootcamp is aimed at preparing young people to become responsible, honest, and effective leaders. He said experienced facilitators and leadership experts from Abia State and other parts of Nigeria were invited to train and guide the participants.

He also said that the real success of the programme would be seen in how the participants use what they learn to improve their communities after the training.

Professor Kalu, however, urged the participants to remain focused, disciplined, and committed throughout the programme. He also encouraged them to support Governor Alex Otti's vision of raising a new generation of responsible and trustworthy leaders in Abia State.

Speaking on behalf of the participants, Awa Ibe, Mgbeahuruike Chidera, Uche Faith, and Chukwuemeka Evans thanked the organisers for giving them the opportunity to take part in the bootcamp.

They also appreciated Governor Alex Otti for introducing the youth leadership programme and promised to take the training seriously.

The participants said they believe the bootcamp will increase their knowledge, improve their leadership skills, and prepare them to serve their communities and take on greater responsibilities in the

Widows Day: Over 600 Widows Receive ₦50,000 Each From Abia First Lady

By Lovina Onwuka

More than 600 widows in Abia State have received ₦50,000 each from the Wife of the Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Chioma Otti, to support their small businesses as the state marked the 2026 International Widows' Day celebration.

The cash support was presented during an event held at the JAAC Secretariat in Umuahia. The 2026 celebration had the theme, "Justice, Dignity and Economic Power for Widows."

Speaking at the event, Mrs. Otti said justice for

widows is not an act of charity but a moral responsibility. She noted that every widow deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, adding that economic empowerment is the key to helping widows become self-reliant and improve their standard of living.

She reaffirmed the commitment of the Abia State Government to protecting the rights, dignity and economic wellbeing of widows across the state.

Mrs. Otti highlighted the achievements of the Dignity Homes Initiative, through which 35 indigent widows from the 17 Local

Government Areas received newly completed houses along with livelihood support to help them rebuild their lives.

She also announced that the government would construct 17 additional homes for widows across the state. According to her, widows will continue to benefit from cash grants, food assistance, skills acquisition programmes and other empowerment initiatives designed to improve their welfare.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Mrs. Ngozi Blessing Felix, said the event

demonstrated the state government's commitment to promoting justice, dignity and economic opportunities for widows.

She explained that under the administration of Governor Dr. Alex Otti, social protection has become a major focus of government through programmes such as the Dignity Homes Project, livelihood support schemes, healthcare interventions and advocacy for the protection of widows' inheritance and property rights.

Mrs. Felix called on families, communities, religious organisations, civil society groups and

development partners to work with the government to end harmful widowhood practices and build a society where widows can live with dignity, security and hope.

The event was organised by the Office of the Wife of the Governor in collaboration with the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection. It attracted government officials, development partners, traditional and religious leaders, civil society organisations, women's groups and hundreds of widows from across Abia State.



Cross-section of Abia youths during the first Abia Youth Leadership Academy Bootcamp held at Government College, Umuahia, recently.

Commission Moves To Improve Disability Care, Trains Therapists, Caregivers

By Lovina Onwuka

The Abia State Commission for the Welfare of Disabled Persons has held a one-week training programme for disability therapists and caregivers. The aim of the programme is to improve the skills of professionals who care for children and adults with disabilities and to make quality rehabilitation services available in more communities across the state.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Chairman of the Commission, Dr. David Anyaele, said the training supports the vision of Governor Alex Otti to build an inclusive society where every person, regardless of disability, is treated with dignity and given equal opportunities to succeed.

Dr. Anyaele explained that the workshop was designed to provide therapists and caregivers

with practical knowledge, modern skills, and better professional experience. He said the training would help them give better care, especially to children living with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

He noted that many families raising children with disabilities face emotional, social, and financial difficulties. According to him, this makes it important to have more trained professionals who can provide the right support to families within their communities.

The Commission Chairman also said that disability care is not only about having professional knowledge but also about showing love, patience, understanding, and compassion to people living with disabilities.

He encouraged all participants to take the training seriously and use

the knowledge they gain to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. He described the programme as an opportunity to serve humanity by helping vulnerable members of society.

Dr. Anyaele further revealed that participants would be assessed throughout the training. Those who perform well and show commitment will be selected for advanced training and may be considered for supervisory positions as the Commission continues to expand disability support services across Abia State.

He said the goal is to build a team of well-trained professionals who will work in communities across the state, providing immediate support to persons with disabilities and promoting inclusion at all levels.

In their goodwill

messages, the Chairman of the Abia State Civil Service Commission, Pastor Eno Jerry, represented by Mrs. Ifeoma Agu, praised the Commission for organising the workshop.

He described it as an important investment that would improve public service and promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The Commissioner for Health, Prof. Enoch Ogbonnaya Uche, represented by Dr. Agomoh Princess Orijei, also reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to inclusive healthcare.

He said better training for therapists and caregivers would improve rehabilitation services and lead to better health outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the Abia State

Primary Health Care Development Agency, Dr. Kalu Ulu, represented by Dr. Adaugo Onwere, and the Commissioner for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Mrs. Ngozi Blessing Felix, represented by Mr. Boniface Kalu, commended the Commission for the initiative. They promised that their agencies would continue to support programmes that improve the welfare and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The lead facilitator, Dr. Eziafakaku Nwokolo, explained that the workshop is meant for therapists, caregivers, teachers and primary healthcare workers. She said participants would learn how to identify, understand and properly support children with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

A TOWERING FIGURE IN SERVICE

AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Some leaders stand tall because of their physical presence, others stand taller because of the lives they touch, the institutions they strengthen and the legacy they leave behind.



- Your journey to the Presidency of GLOBE Legislators Worldwide is neither accidental nor sudden. It is the product of decades of disciplined service, visionary leadership, humility, integrity and an unwavering commitment to the common good.
- From your distinguished eighteen-year career at the United States Embassy in Nigeria, culminating in your appointment as Supervisory Fraud Prevention Specialist, to your impactful representation of Ikwuano/Umuahia North and South Federal Constituency in Nigeria's House of Representatives, your public life has consistently reflected excellence, compassion and purpose.
- As the sponsor of Nigeria's landmark Climate Change Act, you helped lay the foundation for a more sustainable future and positioned our nation prominently within the global climate governance architecture. Your subsequent stewardship of GLOBE Africa further demonstrated your capacity to build consensus and provide principled leadership across borders.
- In recognition of your exceptional legislative contributions, you were, in May 2023, inducted into the National Assembly Hall of Fame (Class of 2019–2023) as one of only five Most Valuable Parliamentarians selected from the 469 members of Nigeria's National Assembly. That rare distinction stands as a fitting testament to your exemplary service, legislative effectiveness and enduring impact on national development.
- Your influence has equally earned global acclaim. In November 2023, the New York-based Business Insider magazine recognised and unveiled you as one of the Top 30 Global Leaders in Climate Action, further affirming your place among the world's foremost advocates of sustainable development and climate leadership.
- Your election and inauguration as President of GLOBE Legislators Worldwide at the House of Commons of the Parliament of the United Kingdom represent not only a personal milestone but also a proud moment for Nigeria, Africa and indeed all who believe in purposeful leadership. It is another affirmation that quiet diligence, character and competence remain enduring pathways to global recognition.
- We are confident that under your leadership, GLOBE Legislators Worldwide will continue to expand its influence, deepen international collaboration and champion bold legislative responses to climate change and sustainable development.
- As you continue to stand tall both in leadership and in service, may your tenure reinforce excellence, strengthen the institution, and leave an enduring legacy for generations to come.

“ It is another affirmation that quiet diligence, character and competence remain enduring pathways to global recognition. ”

Congratulations, Odozi Obodo Gburugburu.
Rt. Hon. Sir Sam Onuigbo, FCIS, FNIM, KJW
President, GLOBE Legislators Worldwide

Signed

Mr. Chinadozi Joseph Atuma Uzuegbu
President,
 Obuohia Development Union

Prince Emeka Ifenwanta
President,
 Ikwuano Development Association
 Dallas, United States of America

Chief Freddy Yeno Godfrey
Chairman, Caretaker Committee
 Ibere Community Association,
 United States of America and Canada

PERSONALITY OF THE WEEK

Dr. Chimaobi Desmond Anyaso: From Entrepreneurial Enterprise to a Vision for Bende's Renewal

At a time when leadership is increasingly measured by ideas, capacity, enterprise and the ability to translate vision into impact, **Dr. Chimaobi Desmond Anyaso** stands out as an entrepreneur, corporate executive, philanthropist and politician whose journey has been defined by resilience, ambition and institution-building.

With more than two decades of business experience, Anyaso has built interests across oil and gas, real estate, hospitality, financial services, healthcare and energy support services. His activities have also extended to education, healthcare, youth empowerment and community development.

Now seeking to represent Bende Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives in 2027 on the platform of the Labour Party, Anyaso is seeking to translate his experience in business and philanthropy into public service through his "Bende Renewal Agenda."

The agenda focuses on education, healthcare, agriculture, youth employment, infrastructure, enterprise development and inclusive growth.

FROM ABA TO THE CORPORATE WORLD

Born on September 16, 1980, in Aba, Abia State, Anyaso hails from Igbera in Bende Local Government Area. Inspired by his parents, who were traders, he developed an early interest in enterprise and business.

He obtained a Bachelor's degree in English and Literature from Ebonyi State University and subsequently completed the mandatory National Youth Service Corps programme.

His early professional career included; working with Elmline Nigeria Limited, South Globe Limited, Traquil Limited and Geo Bureau de Change. These experiences, strengthened his understanding of Nigeria's commercial environment. A major breakthrough came at Aquitaine Oil and Gas Limited, where he started as a junior associate and rose through the ranks to become General Manager in 2006.

At 26, he resigned to establish CAADES Oil and Gas Limited, beginning a journey that would eventually produce a diversified business empire.

BUILDING A BUSINESS EMPIRE

CAADES later evolved through a partnership into Ceecon Energy Oil and Gas Limited, where Anyaso served as Chief Executive Officer.

Under his leadership, the company expanded within Nigeria's petroleum products marketing industry and developed business relationships with international players, including Addax and Vitol, while supplying major organisations.

In 2016, Anyaso exited the partnership and established

Caades Energies Limited, focused on fuel solutions and technical onshore and offshore support services to exploration and production companies.

His business interests subsequently expanded into financial services through SC & C Bureau de Change Limited, a Class 'A' Bureau de Change company licensed by the Central Bank of Nigeria.

He also founded Chimbaland Properties & Investment Company Limited, with investments in prime locations in Lagos, including Lekki, Ikoyi and Victoria Island.

His interests extend to hospitality through Corniche Hotel Limited, which he owns jointly with his wife, and healthcare through his majority ownership of St. Edwards Specialist Hospital and Cardiac Centre.

Continued on P.15

— ADVERTORIAL —

APPRECIATION MESSAGE



The good people of Obuohia in Ibere, Ikwuano Local Government Area, sincerely thank **His Excellency, Dr Alex Chioma Otti, OFR**, for the renovation and functionalisation of the Obuohia Cottage Hospital into a modern **PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CENTRE**.

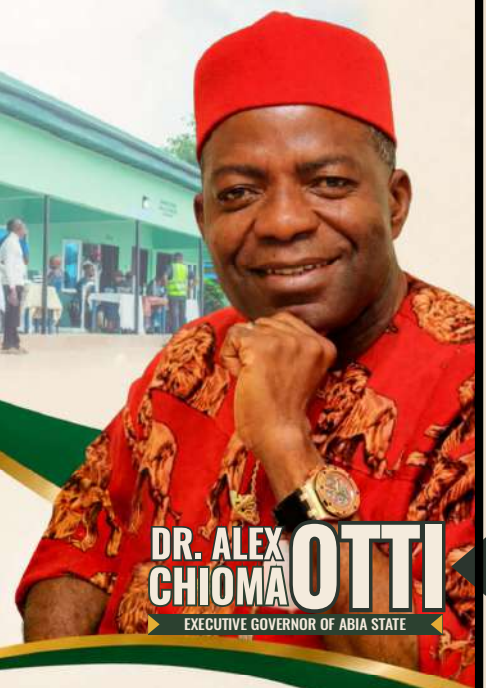
THANK YOU, our dear Governor, for bringing quality healthcare closer to our people.

As we celebrate this milestone, we humbly appeal for the construction of the **OKWE-OBUOHIA-UMUEMENIKE-INYINLA RING ROAD**. This vital road will improve access to our **EXTENSIVE FARMLANDS, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, WEEKLY MARKET**, healthcare services, and other essential community facilities. It will also ease the transportation and evacuation of **FARM PRODUCE**, the **ECONOMIC BACKBONE** of our people, create better access to markets, stimulate local commerce, boost **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY** and accelerate the **SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** of Obuohia and neighbouring communities.

We also respectfully request the deployment of **ADEQUATE HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL** especially **MEDICAL DOCTORS, EXPERIENCED NURSES**, and other essential health professionals, to ensure this important investment delivers its full promise.

Your Excellency, **THANK YOU** for your **COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP**. With these modest interventions, this health facility will become a lasting **LIFELINE** for Obuohia and neighbouring communities.

THANK YOU once again, **CHIOMA NDI ABIA**



DR. ALEX CHIOMA OTTI
EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF ABIA STATE

Signed

Chinadozi Joseph Atuma Uzuegbu
National President
Obuohia Development Union (ODU)

News

Stakeholders Call For Special Electricity Courts

By Kelechi Eme-Ogidi and Lovina Onwuka

Stakeholders have called for stronger collaboration among government agencies, host communities, security organizations, traditional institutions and development partners to curb the rising vandalism of electricity infrastructure and safeguard investments in Nigeria's power sector.

The call was made at a one-day workshop organized by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) on "South-East Regional Sensitization Workshop on Curbing Vandalism of Power Infrastructure in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry", held recently in Umuahia, Abia State.

Presenting papers on "Electricity Infrastructure Protection: From Legal Framework to Effective Enforcement," the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of the Abia State Electricity Regulatory Authority (ASERA), Emeka Onyegbule, and the Executive Director, Legal and Regulatory, Igwu Ukwu, stated that the Abia State Electricity Law, 2025, provides a robust legal framework for combating electricity theft, vandalism and other related offences. They noted that reliable electricity depends on secure infrastructure, stressing that acts of vandalism and electricity theft result in interrupted power supply, reduced investor confidence and slower economic growth.

They emphasized that protecting electricity infrastructure is, therefore, an economic, security and development priority.

They explained that Section 112 of the law confers criminal jurisdiction on the High Court of Abia State over electricity-related offences, while Section 6(1)(n) empowers the state government to facilitate the establishment of Special Electricity Courts to ensure the speedy prosecution of electricity theft, energy theft, vandalism and other unlawful acts.

The presenters stressed that while the law provides the necessary legal backing, effective enforcement requires stronger institutions, coordinated security operations, technology-driven surveillance, community participation and the swift prosecution of offenders. They also advocated regulating the scrap metal market, deploying modern surveillance systems, strengthening intelligence sharing among regulators and security agencies, and intensifying public awareness of the economic consequences of electricity theft.

Representing the Abia State Commissioner for Power and Public Utilities, the Special Adviser to Governor on Energy, Engr. Kachy Etolue, described the workshop as timely and important.

He called for closer collaboration between the Federal and State Governments and emphasized the need for host communities to take ownership of critical electricity infrastructure. He also urged project developers to identify and engage key stakeholders from the planning and construction stages to promote inclusiveness and reduce conflicts.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Power and Public Utilities, Mrs. Nwanyeze O. Otum, commended NERC and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) for organising the workshop in Abia State. She urged participants, particularly traditional rulers, to apply the knowledge gained and champion community ownership as a vital strategy for protecting electricity assets.

Speaking during the interactive session, traditional rulers, including Eze Sir Rex Ohaeri, Eze Prof. C. A. Ucheaga, Eze Iheanyichukwu Ezeigbo and others, called for greater involvement of traditional institutions in securing public infrastructure.

They advocated the provision of a security support fund for communities, the establishment of dedicated institutions to ensure the prosecution of arrested vandals, and the mobilization of local communities to protect electricity installations.

Other stakeholders, including the General Manager, Transmission, Enugu Region, Dr. Thomas Inugonum and Engr. Anaele Omeje of the Enugu State Electricity Regulatory Commission, identified insecurity, weak prosecution of offenders and inadequate community engagement as major drivers of vandalism. They recommended deploying armed security personnel to support surveillance teams, adopting smart technologies such as motion sensors, GPS-enabled cameras and real-time monitoring systems, establishing anti-vandalism task forces, and improving rural electrification to encourage communities to protect electricity facilities.

Participants agreed that protecting electricity infrastructure is a shared responsibility requiring effective legislation, strong enforcement, technological innovation, community ownership and sustained collaboration among governments, regulators, security agencies, traditional institutions and electricity consumers.

They expressed optimism that implementing the recommendations would significantly reduce vandalism, strengthen investor confidence, and improve the reliability and sustainability of electricity supply across the country.

Support for Elderly Is Moral Duty - Governor Otti

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State has urged governments at all levels to place the welfare of senior citizens higher on the national agenda, insisting that older persons deserve protection, dignity and meaningful social support.

He argued that caring for the elderly should be regarded as "a moral and legal obligation", rather than an act of charity and called for policies that guarantee the wellbeing of senior citizens and safeguard their rights.

Governor Otti stated this recently while delivering the keynote address at the 60th birthday symposium of Apostle Bolaji Oluwayanmife Akinyemi, Convener of The Apostolic Roundtable, President of Voice of His Word Ministries and Chairman, Board of Trustees of Project Victory Call Initiative (PVC Naija), in Lagos.

The event, held at the NAFOWA Hall, Children's Park, Sam Ethnan Air Force Base, also featured the public presentation of Akinyemi's latest book, *Global Leadership Code: Donald J. Trump As A Case Study*, and drew an audience of religious leaders, public officials and professionals from across the country.

Addressing participants on the theme, "Life at 60: Senior Citizens, Government's Role and the Citizens' Pact", Governor Otti said nations make greater progress when governments and citizens work together in an atmosphere of accountability, compassion and shared responsibility.

The Governor noted that development cannot be sustained without leadership that prioritises people-centred policies and citizens who remain actively committed to the common good.

He described Apostle Akinyemi as "a man of courage, integrity and selfless service", whose decades of commitment to Christian ministry, leadership development and national discourse have earned him respect across different sectors.

The Governor reaffirmed his administration's commitment to the welfare of senior citizens, citing the Abia State Senior Citizens Centre Law No. 4 of 2025, which he said provides a comprehensive legal framework for the protection, care and social inclusion of residents aged 60 years and above.

He explained that the legislation guarantees access to healthcare, welfare



Governor Alex Otti.

services, emergency assistance and protection against abuse, adding that the mechanisms required for its implementation are already in place.

According to the governor, investments by his administration in healthcare, education and road infrastructure are intended not only to improve economic opportunities for younger generations but also to ensure that retired citizens enjoy security, dignity and quality

healthcare.

He maintained that governments must adopt long-term policies capable of improving the quality of life of both present and future generations.

Governor Otti congratulated Apostle Akinyemi on attaining the age of 60, describing the milestone as a celebration of purpose, resilience and impactful leadership.

He urged Nigerians to embrace constructive

dialogue, patriotism and collective responsibility, saying that national progress would depend largely on citizens' willingness to work together in pursuit of the country's shared aspirations.

In his remarks, Pastor Goke Poka of House on the Rock Ministries stressed the importance of loyalty and nation-building, saying that genuine loyalty should extend beyond personal interests to include commitment to God, society and the nation's collective advancement.

He encouraged Nigerians to cultivate values that promote unity, integrity and selfless service.

The event featured goodwill messages, prayers and tributes from family members, friends and associates with many describing the celebrant as a committed minister, mentor and advocate of transformational leadership.

Highlight of the ceremony was the unveiling of Akinyemi's new book, *Global Leadership Code: Donald J. Trump As A Case Study*, by Governor Otti and other guests, followed by the ceremonial cutting of the birthday cake.

2026 Breastfeeding Week: Abia First Lady Moves To Open Daycare Centres

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

The Wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, has reaffirmed her commitment to improving maternal and child health through the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding, women empowerment, and nutrition programmes across the state.

Mrs. Otti made this known during the flag-off of the 2026 World Breastfeeding Week and Baby Show. The event was organised by the Abia State Primary Healthcare Development Agency in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Office of the Wife of the Governor, and the Ministry of Women Affairs.

Speaking at the event, Mrs. Otti described breastfeeding as one of the most effective ways to ensure child survival, healthy growth, and sustainable development. She said this year's theme, "Breastfeeding for a Sustainable Start in Life: Strengthening What Works," is a call for renewed commitment to proven strategies that improve infant feeding practices.

She explained that breast milk provides complete nutrition for babies during their first six months of life. According to her, it strengthens their immune system, supports brain development, and protects them against illnesses such as diarrhoea, pneumonia, and malnutrition.

Mrs. Otti also highlighted the benefits of breastfeeding for mothers, noting that it helps them recover after childbirth, reduces the risk of breast and ovarian cancers, supports healthy birth spacing, and protects the environment because it is a natural and waste-free feeding option.

She acknowledged the challenges many nursing mothers face, including poor family support, misinformation, demanding work schedules, and limited access to trained breastfeeding counsellors.

The First Lady, therefore, called for

stronger collaboration among families, employers, healthcare workers, community leaders, and government institutions to create a more supportive environment for breastfeeding.

Mrs. Otti commended the Abia State Ministry of Health and the Abia State Primary Healthcare Development Agency for improving healthcare delivery in the state.

She also praised Governor Alex Otti for giving priority to the health sector and appreciated development partners, especially UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), for their continued support in promoting maternal and child nutrition.

As part of her office's commitment to maternal and child health, Mrs. Otti announced plans to establish at least five additional daycare centres in government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies within the next six months. She said this follows the successful establishment of a daycare centre at the Ministry of Justice.

She further revealed that her proposed Food Bank Initiative will provide nutritional support to nursing mothers and women of childbearing age. She added that livelihood grants through agricultural and other empowerment programmes will continue to improve the economic well-being of women and help them care for their families.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Health, Prof. Enoch Ogbonna Uche, and the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Dr. Maureen Aghukwa had reaffirmed the Abia State Government's commitment to ensuring that every child receives proper nutrition through the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding.

News

Eze Chikwekwem Honours Emmanuel Over Rural Electrification Project

By Okereke Kate

The Traditional Ruler of Nkwogwu Autonomous Community, Afugiri, in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State, Eze Chijioke Chikwekwem, has commended Comrade Chibuike Emmanuel for attracting a solar-powered street lighting project to the community, while calling on other sons and daughters of the community to emulate the gesture by investing in grassroots development.

Speaking with the National Ambassador in his palace during a ceremony organised to honour Comrade Emmanuel, the monarch described the installation of 245 solar street lights across the community as a landmark achievement that has improved security, enhanced the environment, and brought renewed hope to residents.

According to EzeChikwekwem, the lights have been strategically installed across the nooks and crannies of Umuekwule, transforming previously dark areas and making movement safer for residents.

"We gathered to appreciate our son who attracted 245 solar street lights to our community. Today, every part of Umuekwule is illuminated, and our people can now move freely at night," the royal father said.

While applauding Comrade Emmanuel's contribution, the monarch appealed to other indigenes and friends of the community to complement the development efforts by supporting education, women empowerment, and other social intervention programmes.

"Our community still has many developmental needs. Our children require scholarships to pursue their education, while our women need financial support to expand their farms and businesses. I urge every son, daughter, and friend of Umuekwule to come home and contribute to the growth of our community," he added.

In his remarks, the President General of Umuekwule Autonomous Community, Mr. EboChikwendu, described the honour as a well-deserved recognition of selfless service, noting that gratitude is a catalyst for greater achievements.

He said the solar lighting project would positively transform the community, improve social and economic activities, and strengthen security.

"Light symbolizes success, while gratitude is the roadmap to greater prosperity. Comrade Chibuike Emmanuel remembered his maternal home and has made a lasting impact. As a community, we are honouring him to encourage others to do likewise. Let us continue to promote love, unity, forgiveness, and celebrate one another's successes," he said.

Also speaking, the Palace Secretary of Nkwogwu Autonomous Community, High Chief C.C. Chukwu, and the Village Head, Royal High Chief Ekeoba Sydney Obinna, commended Comrade Emmanuel for his commitment to community development and prayed for God's continued blessings upon him.

The women leaders of the community, led by the President General of Umuekwule Women, Mrs. ChisaraAhamba, alongside High Chief Mrs. OluchiNwosu, praised Comrade Emmanuel for addressing the insecurity previously associated with dark roads in the area.

Responding, Comrade Emmanuel expressed gratitude to the community for the honour, describing it as one of the greatest recognitions he has ever received.

He explained that the project was facilitated to improve security, ease movement at night, beautify the community, and enhance the quality of life of residents.

"This is one of the happiest days of my life. I have never received this level of recognition before, and I sincerely appreciate my people for this honour.

"I dedicate this award to the Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Dr. Samuel Ogbuku, whose leadership has created opportunities for young people to contribute meaningfully to nation-building. I derive immense joy from impacting lives, and I remain committed to serving my people whenever the opportunity arises," he said.



Representative of the Wife of the Governor, Mrs. Chinenye Nwaka (3 right), with members of the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church, Old Umuahia, during the presentation of an Award of Excellence in Leadership to the Wife of the Governor.

SDA Church Honours Mrs. Otti Over Support For Women, Others

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Old Umuahia, has honoured the Wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, with an Award of Excellence in Leadership for her good leadership and support for women, families, and community development.

The award was presented during the church's Women's Ministries Day celebration and fundraising programme to support the completion of its church building.

Receiving the award on behalf of the First Lady, the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Women Affairs, Mrs. ChinenyeNwaka, thanked the church for the honour. She said Mrs. Otti remains committed to

promoting Christian values, strong families, and the development of communities.

Mrs. Nwaka said the church building is more than just a place of worship. According to her, it will be a place where people will grow in faith, families will be strengthened, and lives will be changed.

She encouraged members, friends, and well-wishers to support the project with generous donations, adding that people can achieve great things when they work together.

The governor's aide said, "As women, we have always built our homes, upheld good values, and contributed to society. We are also called to help build God's Church and support a vision that will benefit future generations."

Mrs. Nwaka also made a personal donation. She urged women to remain prayerful and continue to live with honesty, good character, and excellence in their homes, workplaces, and communities.

She also advised members of the church to get their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and be ready to take part in the coming general elections.

Earlier, the Women's Ministries Leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Old Umuahia, Mrs. Precious Nwokocha, had said the event was organised to thank God for His faithfulness and to recognise women whose dedication and service have helped the church to grow.

She congratulated all the award recipients and

encouraged them to continue serving God and humanity with humility, love, and commitment.

Mrs. Nwokocha also announced that the church is raising ₦10 million to complete its worship auditorium. She said the project would serve both the present and future generations of worshippers.

In his remarks, the Senior Pastor of the church, Pastor Samuel Onwumere, appealed to members, friends, and well-wishers to support the building project. Quoting 2 Corinthians 9:7, he reminded the congregation that "God loves a cheerful giver" and prayed that God will bless everyone who contributes to the successful completion of the project.

January - August 2026: Abia Spends N1.2bn On Medical, Social Support Programmes

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

The Abia State Government says it has spent N1.2 billion between January and August 2026 on life-saving medical treatment and social support programmes for vulnerable residents. It also recovered N20.9 million in unused funds and returned the money to the state treasury through routine monitoring.

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kanu, disclosed this recently while briefing journalists on the outcome of the State Executive Council meeting chaired by Governor Alex Otti.

He said 81 vulnerable groups benefited from the state's social protection programmes, which are aimed at improving the welfare of residents.

According to the commissioner, the programmes were carried out by the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection in line with the state's social protection policy.

He said the support included funding for life-saving medical treatment, housing assistance for persons with disabilities, emergency shelter for disaster victims, and educational support for indigent students across the state.

Prince Kanu explained that the ministry has continued to identify and assist vulnerable citizens with urgent medical and humanitarian needs. He added that the Otti administration has consistently approved such requests as part of its commitment to compassionate governance.

He said regular monitoring of the programmes ensured that government funds were properly used, leading to the recovery and refund of N20.9 million to the state treasury.

On efforts to tackle sexual and gender-based violence, Prince Kanu said the Nchedo Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Aba handled 11 cases between July and August. He said survivors received medical, psychosocial, legal and referral services, while six suspects were arrested, with four already prosecuted.

The commissioner also announced progress under the Nigeria for Women Project, a World Bank-supported programme aimed at improving women's livelihoods and economic empowerment.

He said Governor Otti had approved and paid the state's N450 million counterpart funding, making it possible to expand the programme.

The project, which was previously

implemented in Ohafia, IsialaNgwa North, and Obingwa Local Government Areas, has now been extended to IsialaNgwa South, Ugwuagbo, Arochuku, Bende, Ikwuano, and Ukwu West LGAs.

Prince Kanu said the expansion will increase the number of participating women's affinity groups from 3,000 to 6,000. He encouraged eligible women in the newly added local government areas to register with the State Project Implementation Unit to benefit from the programme.

On infrastructure, the commissioner said the Ministry of Works has completed direct labour projects at 46 locations across the state.

He said desilting work had been completed along IBB Way, Ahieke Road, Finbarrs Road, Road 8, and Obowo Street by Ibeku Road in Umuahia, to improve drainage and reduce flooding during the rainy season.

Prince Kanu further disclosed that 26 road projects are still under contract across the state. He noted that although heavy rainfall has slowed work at some project sites, construction is expected to progress faster as weather conditions improve.

News

Olokoro Stakeholders Endorse Trust Fund To Sustain Community Development

By Ekebuisi Precious

Stakeholders of Olokoro Community have endorsed measures to institutionalize the Olokoro Development Trust Fund (ODTF), a community-driven initiative established by renowned engineer and philanthropist, Engr. Barth Obi Thompson, to promote youth empowerment and sustainable development.

The endorsement followed a strategic workshop involving the Board of Trustees of the Trust Fund and other key stakeholders, which culminated in the adoption of a communiqué outlining the vision, governance structure, and operational framework of the initiative.

The ODTF was established to manage the ₦150 million Endowment Fund instituted by Engr. Thompson to commemorate his 80th birthday last year.

The fund is aimed at creating meaningful opportunities for youth engagement, supporting skills development, and driving other impactful community development programmes across Olokoro.

Participants at the workshop unanimously expressed support for the initiative, describing it as a bold and visionary step toward building a lasting legacy that will positively impact present and future generations.

They stressed the importance of putting in place a strong institutional framework that would guarantee the sustainability of the Trust Fund beyond its founder and the current generation.

The communiqué further affirmed that all future activities and engagements of the Trust Fund would be guided by the principles of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. It noted that the operations of the Fund would remain open to public scrutiny and accessible to all interested stakeholders.

The stakeholders commended Thompson for his exceptional vision, generosity and unwavering commitment to the development of Olokoro Community.

They prayed for God's continued strength and good health for him, while expressing the hope that more philanthropists would emulate his example by investing in initiatives that promote sustainable community development.

Ministry, BOA Move To Support Women Farmers

From Sophina Ovuike, Abuja

The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has entered into a strategic partnership with the Bank of Agriculture (BOA) to expand access to agricultural finance and support for women farmers under the Renewed Hope Women Agro-Value Expansion (RH-WAVE) Programme.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed in Abuja recently, is aimed at empowering no fewer than three million women farmers over the next three to five years through affordable financing, mechanisation, capacity building, agro-processing and improved market access.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajjalmaan Suleiman-Ibrahim, described the agreement as a significant step towards eliminating barriers that have long prevented women from participating fully in commercial agriculture.

She said the initiative aligns with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which prioritises inclusive economic growth, food security and sustainable development through the economic empowerment of women.

According to the Minister, although women make up a large proportion of Nigeria's agricultural workforce, many remain excluded from formal credit facilities and lack access to modern farming equipment, quality inputs, infrastructure and profitable markets.

She explained that the RH-WAVE Programme was designed to support women across the entire agricultural value chain, including land



The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development Hajjalmaan Suleiman-Ibrahim

preparation, access to improved seedlings and fertilisers, mechanised farming, greenhouse cultivation, processing, packaging, value addition and market linkages.

"The objective is to move women beyond subsistence farming into profitable agribusinesses capable of creating wealth, generating employment and strengthening Nigeria's food security", she said.

Earlier, the Minister's Special Assistant on Projects presented an overview of the programme, noting that RH-WAVE has been integrated into the Ministry's Economic Services, Women Development and Gender Departments to ensure effective implementation and sustainability.

She disclosed that the programme has attracted widespread interest since its launch by President Tinubu in Nasarawa State, where ₦1 million grants were presented to women

entrepreneurs.

According to her, over 200,000 women have already registered to participate in the initiative through various partner platforms.

She added that the collaboration with the Bank of Agriculture provides the institutional support needed to deliver affordable credit, agricultural inputs, entrepreneurship training, agro-processing facilities and business development services to women farmers nationwide.

In his remarks, the Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Mrs. Esuabaro Nko Asanye, described the partnership as a milestone in the Federal Government's efforts to promote women's economic empowerment through agriculture.

She said women remain the backbone of household food production and expressed confidence that the initiative would accelerate their transition into commercial farming while boosting national food security.

Mrs. Asanye also commended the management of the Bank of Agriculture for supporting the Ministry's vision of building a new generation of successful women agripreneurs.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Bank of Agriculture, Mr. Ayo Sotiorin, said the partnership is built on three strategic pillars to improve opportunities for women farmers.

He explained that the

first component provides concessional agricultural loans through Farmer Aggregation Companies at an interest rate below 10 per cent annually for the first 10,000 women farmers, alongside a dedicated greenhouse financing scheme to encourage climate-smart agriculture.

According to him, the second component focuses on establishing co-branded WAVE-BOA AgriHubs equipped with tractors, solar-powered dryers and modern agro-processing equipment, benefiting from the Federal Government's 40 per cent Presidential subsidy on agricultural machinery.

He said the facilities would be managed primarily by women to promote rural enterprises, improve productivity and increase value addition.

The third component, he added, provides a structured aggregation and marketing system that will guarantee the purchase of farm produce at prices above prevailing market rates, ensuring stable incomes and stronger market linkages for women farmers.

Sotiorin said implementation of the programme would begin in Plateau, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Sokoto, Bauchi and Nasarawa states before expanding to other parts of the country.

He reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to providing innovative financial products and strategic support that would enable women farmers to adopt modern agricultural technologies and build sustainable agribusinesses.

The minister further stated that the MoU establishes a governance framework comprising a Joint Steering Committee, Programme Management Unit and State Coordination Nodes to oversee implementation, monitor progress and ensure accountability.

She said both institutions would immediately begin programme planning, mapping of Farmer Aggregation Companies and identification of locations for the proposed AgriHubs.

The signing of the agreement marks the commencement of a partnership expected to improve rural livelihoods, increase food production, create jobs and strengthen women's participation in Nigeria's agricultural and economic development.

Ajamolu Marks Odun Oba Festival

By Ezewuru Adaaze Mary

Cultural heritage, history and community took centre stage in Onisere Kingdom, Ondo State, as traditional rulers, dignitaries and residents gathered at the palace of His Royal Majesty, Oba OlafusiGbemi Johnson (Anienoye I), the Ajamolu of Onisere Kingdom, to celebrate the 2026 Odun Oba, the annual King's Festival.

The two-day festival

opened with the conferment of chieftaincy titles on selected sons of the kingdom before the monarch embarked on his traditional procession across the communities under his domain. The procession began at the royal palace opposite Onirogbo Junction in Aghejire and passed through Oke-Ondo, Olabode and Akinwande before concluding at Alagbado.

The annual walk, a significant feature of the

festival, provides an opportunity for the monarch to interact directly with residents of the various villages in the kingdom.

During the procession, the king exchanged greetings with his subjects and offered prayers and declarations for peace, blessings, growth, harmony and infrastructural development. Residents responded with repeated chants of "Ase," a Yoruba expression meaning "Amen."

Activities on the second day included cultural

performances, talent displays and the inauguration of the Youth Assembly.

The celebration also drew several prominent traditional rulers, including the Osemawe and Paramount Ruler of Ondo Kingdom, Oba Adesimbo Kiladejo, Jilo III; Oba Adeoye, the Oluoke of Okeigbo Kingdom; Oba Nelson Akintolayo, the Akamuja of Igburowo; and Oba Basiru Takuro, The Olusan of Ayesan, among others

Opinion

Dr. Alex Otti: The Custodian of Historic Memory

By Christian Uche Anokwuru, PHD

In the heart of Igboland, Dr. Alex C. Otti is quietly engineering a renaissance of remembrance, one boulevard, one lesson, and one solemn gathering at a time.

A road is rarely just a road. When the old Mission Hill artery in Umuahia was widened into Abia State's first six lane boulevard, the transformation was more than asphalt and engineering. It was a declaration. Stretching across the capital with quiet grandeur, the thoroughfare bears not the name of a transient politician or a patron, but that of Major General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi, Nigeria's first military head of state and a son of Igbo soil.

Every commuter who glides along that expanse, every schoolchild who asks why the name sounds like history, every visitor who glimpses the sign, is offered a silent tutorial in a legacy that an earlier generation of leaders allowed to gather dust. Governor Alex C. Otti, the man who willed this boulevard into existence, did something deceptively simple: he placed memory at the centre of the city, making it impossible to ignore.

To understand the depth of that gesture, one must first reckon with what was nearly lost. The Igbo people carry one of the most remarkable civilisational stories in Africa, a narrative woven with extraordinary enterprise, restless intellectual energy, and an ancient democratic tradition that flourished long before such ideals became fashionable in distant capitals. This is a heritage that deserves not merely a footnote in scholarly journals but

a living presence in the daily lives of those who inherited it. Yet, for decades, the custodians of governance in the southeast seemed to forget this truth.

Leaders rose and fell without truly honouring the giants who came before them. Institutions crumbled into neglect. Monuments that once stood as testaments to achievement fell into disrepair, and the younger generation began to drift, unmoored from the memory of their own greatness. Abia State, sitting at the very heart of Igboland, ought to have been the sacred keeper of this flame. Instead, it became, for a painful season, a symbol of what can go wrong when governance loses its soul.

Governor Otti's administration has set out to reverse that decline with a series of deliberate acts that are at once deeply cultural and profoundly practical. The most far reaching of these is the policy making the Igbo language a compulsory subject in all basic and secondary schools across Abia State. This is not a ceremonial nod to heritage, a plaque on a wall or a slogan for a cultural day. It is a policy with real teeth and measurable consequences, woven into the fabric of the education system. Otti has warned, with the clarity of a man who has studied the fate of vanished peoples, that a community which abandons its language is a community in the early stages of extinction. "Our people must know who we are," he has said, "what we have gone through, and how we have arrived where we are today." By making Igbo compulsory, he is ensuring that the next generation will not need to rely on distant historians to reconstruct their identity. They

will carry the language in their mouths and, through the language, they will carry the memory of their people, its proverbs, its cosmology, its irreplaceable way of seeing the world.

This same philosophy of embedded remembrance guided the naming of that splendid boulevard. The choice of Aguiyi Ironsi was not a random dip into a catalog of notable figures. Ironsi occupies a singular, complicated place in Nigerian history, a soldier who ascended to the highest office in a moment of national crisis, only to be cut down in a counter coup that would alter the nation's trajectory forever. To name the first modern six lane road in the Abia capital after him is to insist that his story, and by extension the story of the Igbo contribution to the Nigerian project, be centred rather than marginalised. The inauguration was itself a layered tapestry of meaning. Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe (rtd), a former Chief of Staff and a respected voice from the southeast, performed the ceremony, linking the memory of Ironsi to another generation of service and sacrifice. Every detail of that occasion spoke of a leader who understands that governance, at its most elevated, is a form of storytelling.

Just recently, this commitment to memory took on an even more solemn dimension. In Umuahia, Governor Otti organised a significant memorial service marking the sixtieth anniversary of Major General Ironsi's death. The event was more than a ceremony; it was a powerful call for national unity, reconciliation, and collective remembrance. For

Otti, the deep rooted passion for Igbo history and its heroes is never an exercise in narrow ethnic celebration. Honouring a son of the soil who occupied the nation's highest office becomes, in his hands, a way of promoting the late leader's own vision of a united country. The memorial, held with dignity and attended by those who still carry the weight of that history, demonstrated how learning from Nigeria's complex past can be the foundation for a future built on justice, accountability, and a shared sense of belonging. It was a classical illustration of the truth that remembering Igbo heroes is integral to the broader, richer story of a stronger and more cohesive Nigeria.

What is unfolding in Abia State under Alex Otti is not a collection of isolated cultural projects. It is a coherent philosophy of leadership, a recognition that a people without a vivid sense of their journey cannot navigate the future with confidence. Before his arrival, the infrastructure of memory had grown as dilapidated as the physical roads. Now, the roads are being rebuilt, and along their edges, memory is being replanted. The compulsory teaching of Igbo, the naming of monuments after titans, the reverent marking of solemn anniversaries, all these actions converge on a single point. Governor Otti is governing, yes, but he is also preserving, honouring, and building a legacy that will endure for generations to come. He is restoring the soul of a place that should have always been its custodian, and in doing so, he is showing that the truest form of progress walks hand in hand with a grateful and unbroken remembrance of the past.

PERSONALITY OF THE WEEK ➤ Dr. Chimaobi Desmond Anyaso:

Continued from P. 11 *From Entrepreneurial Enterprise to a Vision for Bende's Renewal*

A CULTURE OF GIVING

For Anyaso, business has also provided a platform for philanthropy.

Through the Chima Anyaso Foundation, he has supported community development initiatives and organised medical outreaches across Bende Federal Constituency and Abia North Senatorial District, providing consultations, screenings and treatment to thousands of residents.

His education intervention includes the Ahuoma Anyaso Educational Foundation, established in 2009 to provide tuition-free education to children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The initiative also provides school uniforms, learning materials and other support.

His philanthropic activities have earned him recognitions including the African Achievers Award for Community Development and the Democracy Youth Icon of the Year Award in 2017.

A VISION FOR BENDE

Moving from philanthropy into politics, Anyaso's Bende Renewal Agenda is built around the belief that effective representation should produce measurable improvements in the lives of constituents.

The proposed framework would be pursued through legislative advocacy, constituency interventions, oversight functions and partnerships with government agencies, development organisations and the private sector.

Education is a major pillar. The agenda proposes school rehabilitation, improved classrooms,

science laboratories, libraries, water and sanitation facilities, electricity, teacher development, ICT centres, computer laboratories, robotics and coding clubs, digital learning platforms, scholarships and educational grants.

In healthcare, it proposes upgrading primary healthcare facilities with improved equipment, essential medicines, electricity, water and staffing. Maternal and child healthcare, immunisation, nutrition, medical outreaches, eye and dental care, hypertension and diabetes screening are also prioritised.

AGRICULTURE AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Recognising agriculture as a major economic opportunity in Bende, Anyaso proposes an agricultural modernisation programme focused on access to tractors, irrigation equipment, processing machinery, extension services, storage facilities, cold rooms and farm-to-market roads.

Youth and women would receive special attention through agribusiness training, cooperatives, access to finance and stronger connections to markets.

Youth employment is another major component. Proposed skills centres would provide training in trades such as electrical installation, plumbing, welding, carpentry, fashion, hospitality, auto mechanics, renewable energy and ICT hardware maintenance.

Digital-skills programmes would cover programming, digital marketing, data analytics, web design, artificial intelligence awareness and cybersecurity.

Entrepreneurship support, apprenticeships, internships, graduate placements and innovation hubs are also proposed.

INFRASTRUCTURE, SPORTS AND INCLUSION

The agenda identifies roads, electricity, water and digital connectivity as essential to development.

It proposes advocacy for the rehabilitation of strategic federal and rural roads, rural electrification, solar-powered projects, boreholes, improved sanitation, broadband expansion and community Wi-Fi.

Sports development is also included, with proposals for community football fields, basketball and volleyball courts, athletics facilities, grassroots competitions, talent scouting and support for football academies.

Environmental protection would focus on erosion control, drainage, watershed management, tree planting, waste management and climate-change awareness.

For women and vulnerable groups, the agenda includes skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, cooperatives, financial literacy, girls' education, maternal healthcare, financial inclusion and support for persons living with disabilities.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

To give the programme an immediate implementation focus, Anyaso has outlined a First 100 Days Agenda comprising the establishment of a functional constituency

office, education and healthcare needs assessments, a medical outreach, a Farmers' Development Summit, agricultural value-chain mapping, youth skills registration and digital-skills partnerships.

Priority roads would also be identified, with infrastructure needs assessments commencing across the constituency.

THE MAN BEHIND THE VISION

Beyond business and politics, Anyaso is a committed Christian, devoted husband, father and friend. He is married to Mrs. Adanna Anyaso, and they are blessed with children.

His journey from Aba to the corporate world, entrepreneurship, philanthropy and now political participation represents a transition from private enterprise to a broader quest for public impact.

As the 2027 political season approaches, Anyaso is positioning himself as an entrepreneur seeking to bring his experience in enterprise-building, philanthropy and institution development into public service.

His stated vision is to contribute to a Bende where schools are stronger, healthcare is accessible, agriculture is productive, young people have opportunities, businesses can thrive and development reaches communities across the constituency.

Ultimately, however, the success of the vision will depend on its translation from proposals into measurable results, and on whether the people of Bende entrust him with the mandate to pursue it.



ASUBEB Extends Bid Opening For 2024, 2025 UBE Intervention Projects

The Abia State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB) has announced an extension of the bid opening date for the ongoing procurement process for the implementation of the 2024 and 2025 Universal Basic Education (UBE) Intervention Projects.

In an addendum signed by the Executive Chairman of the Board, Mrs. Lydia Onuoha, ASUBEB stated that the bid opening exercise, initially scheduled for Wednesday, August 5, 2026, has been postponed to Wednesday, August 19, 2026.

According to the Board, the exercise will commence at 12:00 noon at the Conference Room of the Abia State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB), Umuahia.

ASUBEB clarified that all other bidding guidelines and requirements contained in its earlier invitation to tender, published in the Punch, Vanguard, and National Ambassador Newspapers of July 6, 2026, remain unchanged.

See also Anyaso Donates Ambulance

The Board expressed regret over any inconvenience the change in date may cause to prospective bidders and urged all participants to take note of the new schedule.

Signed:
Management

For The Record

A Tribute to Visionary Leadership and Triumph of Purposeful Governance

By Hon. Ogenma Okoro Kalu

There are moments in the history of a people when gratitude ceases to be a mere courtesy and becomes an irrevocable moral obligation. Such moments deserve not silence but eloquent acknowledgement. Such is the historic transformation that has befallen the Arochukwu General Hospital under the visionary administration of the Executive Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, OFR.

After beholding the astonishing transformation of Arochukwu General Hospital, one cannot resist the irresistible conclusion that purposeful leadership is neither an abstraction nor a political slogan but a tangible reality measured by enduring legacies and life changing infrastructure.

The once neglected health institution has been reborn into a magnificent medical complex that rivals the finest public healthcare facilities in the Country. The comprehensive reconstruction, architectural redesign, modern retrofitting, newly erected structures, aesthetically landscaped environment, fortified perimeter fencing and the installation of a dedicated giant brand new electricity transformer have collectively elevated the hospital to a standard worthy of universal admiration.

Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to affirm that Arochukwu General Hospital now ranks among the most modern and impressive general hospitals in Nigeria. It is a masterpiece of public infrastructure and an enduring testament to a government that places the sanctity of human life above political rhetoric.

For this monumental accomplishment, Governor Alex Chioma Otti deserves the

profound appreciation, admiration and enduring gratitude of every son and daughter of Arochukwu. His administration has demonstrated that governance anchored on competence, prudence and compassion can restore public confidence and inspire collective hope.

Yet, intellectual honesty compels us to acknowledge another indispensable architect of this developmental renaissance in the person of the Majority Leader of the Abia State House of Assembly and Member representing Arochukwu State Constituency, Hon. Uchenna Okoro Kalu.

Development seldom occurs in isolation. Great achievements are often the products of strategic collaboration, constructive engagement and mutual trust between visionary executives and responsive legislators. The flourishing partnership between Governor Alex Otti and Hon. Uchenna Okoro Kalu has become a compelling illustration of this timeless political principle.

Hon. Uchenna Okoro Kalu has distinguished himself as far more than a legislator. He has emerged as a relentless advocate, an effective bridge between government and the governed, and a dependable voice whose unwavering commitment continues to attract meaningful developmental interventions to Arochukwu State Constituency.

The rebirth of Arochukwu General Hospital is only one chapter in an unfolding story of unprecedented infrastructural renewal.

The construction of the Amuvi-Ndi okereke-Okobo-Abam Road, the ongoing rehabilitation of strategic Arochukwu to Ohafia Federal Road, the construction of internal roads across Arochukwu LGA, the

award of the Ututu-Isu to Cross Rivers State Federal Road, the construction of the modern State High Court Complex at Amassa Ututu, the construction of a brand new Omenuko bridge, the ongoing road project linking Idima Abam to Arochukwu with bridges, the establishment of a poultry/piggery farm in Amassa Ututu and the establishment of a new General Hospital in Abam collectively represent a developmental revolution unprecedented in the contemporary history of our constituency.

From Ututu to Ihechiowa, from Isu to Abam, and across the entire Arochukwu State Constituency, the unmistakable footprints of responsive governance are becoming increasingly visible. These projects are not accidental occurrences; they are the dividends of constructive engagement, strategic representation and an enviable working relationship between the Executive and the Legislature.

This is precisely why the people must jealously preserve this productive alliance. History teaches that societies advance most rapidly when they consolidate excellence rather than abandon it. Progress flourishes where visionary leadership enjoys continuity, institutional cooperation and popular confidence.

As preparations gradually gather momentum for the 2027 general elections, the electorate must appreciate that the most profound expression of gratitude is not applause but the ballot. Votes remain the most powerful instrument through which citizens reward performance and encourage continuity.

Consequently, I respectfully call upon the good people of Arochukwu State Constituency, Arochukwu/Ohafia Federal

Constituency and Abia North Senatorial District to consolidate these developmental gains by supporting the re-election of Governor Alex Chioma Otti, the return of Hon. Uchenna Okoro Kalu to the Abia State House of Assembly, and the election of Labour Party candidates for the Senate and House of Representatives. Such continuity will preserve the synergy that has brought visible progress to our communities.

A winning team should never be dismantled in the midst of victory. Leadership that consistently delivers measurable development deserves renewed confidence, not unnecessary experimentation.

The transformed Arochukwu General Hospital is more than bricks, concrete and steel, it is a powerful metaphor for restored hope, renewed confidence and responsible governance. It proclaims that government can indeed work when guided by sincerity of purpose, administrative competence and an unwavering commitment to public welfare.

Governor Alex Chioma Otti has demonstrated exceptional statesmanship. Hon. Uchenna Okoro Kalu has exemplified effective representation. Together, they have authored a remarkable chapter in the developmental history of Arochukwu.

Posterity will undoubtedly remember those who transformed neglected institutions into centres of excellence, restored dignity to public service and proved that genuine leadership is measured not by promises made, but by promises fulfilled.

When visionary leadership converges with purposeful representation, development ceases to be an aspiration but becomes an undeniable reality.

Joseph Jacob

Joseph JACOB/1914
070361698671



Creative Writers Hangout

Dear Step-mother (10)

You'll both train with the first team immediately," one coach explained. "Depending on fitness assessments, one of you may dress for the weekend's cup final."

Uche's throat felt dry. Just months earlier, he had been diving on rough dusty pitches back in Nigeria.

Now he was being called into the senior Rangers squad.

The reality felt almost unreal.

As he followed staff members deeper into the senior training building, Uche passed enormous framed photographs of club legends, packed stadium crowds, and trophy celebrations stretching back generations.

His heart pounded harder with every step. The dream was no longer distant anymore. It was beginning to touch him.

The morning of the Scottish Cup final arrived beneath dark rolling clouds over Glasgow. Rain had fallen through most of the night, leaving the city wet and shining beneath pale morning light. Streets surrounding Hampden Park were already overflowing hours before kickoff. Blue scarves waved from car windows. Supporters poured from buses and train stations singing loudly despite the freezing wind.

Inside the Rangers team hotel, tension lived in every corridor. Players moved quietly through breakfast, focused and restless. Plates clinked softly. Television screens replayed highlights from previous finals while football analysts debated the goalkeeping situation that had suddenly become the biggest story in Scottish football.

Nobody expected a seventeen-year-old Nigerian academy goalkeeper to be involved in the biggest match of the season. Not until the senior goalkeeping crisis forced circumstances to change.

Uche sat alone near the corner of the dining hall stirring tea he could barely drink. His appetite had vanished completely. Across the room, experienced first-team players spoke in low voices while coaches checked tactical notes repeatedly.

Then the door opened. The manager, Graeme Sinclair, entered.

He was a stern-looking man in his early fifties with sharp cheekbones, silver hair, and the heavy presence of someone accustomed to pressure. Even his silence commanded attention.

"Meeting room. Five minutes," he announced.

Inside the tactical room, the atmosphere became suffocating. Players sat upright in padded chairs while diagrams of Celtic's attacking patterns glowed on large digital screens. Rain tapped steadily against the windows outside.

Sinclair stood at the front

holding the team sheet. When he finally read the lineup, the room froze briefly. "In goal, Uche Obi."

Uche felt his heartbeat slam violently inside his chest.

A few players glanced toward him in surprise, but none questioned the decision.

Jamie McBride, the older U-23 goalkeeper sitting nearby, nodded respectfully toward him, "Go make history, mate," he whispered quietly.

The bus journey to Hampden Park felt unreal.

Police escorts cleared roads while thousands of supporters lined the streets waving scarves and filming with phones. The massive stadium rose slowly into view through the mist like a giant fortress of steel and concrete.

Inside, the noise was already deafening. More than fifty thousand fans packed the stands, creating a sea of blue and green stretching endlessly beneath towering floodlights. Giant banners hung across sections of the stadium while chants rolled like thunder through the cold afternoon air.

Uche stepped onto the pitch for warm-ups and nearly stopped breathing. Everything felt enormous. The stadium lights, the roaring crowd and the pressure.

Television cameras followed his every movement because the storyline was irresistible – an unknown Nigerian teenager starting a Scottish Cup final against defending champions Celtic F.C..

Douglas Fraser stood near the touchline with both hands buried deep inside his long black coat.

As Uche jogged past, the old coach spoke calmly.

"First mistake you make today," Douglas said, "forget it immediately."

Uche nodded nervously.

Then the match began. The noise inside Hampden exploded the moment the whistle sounded. Celtic started aggressively, moving the ball sharply across the slick wet surface. Their supporters roared with every attack while Rangers struggled initially to settle.

Five minutes into the match came disaster. A harmless-looking cross floated into the Rangers penalty area through light rain. Uche moved forward confidently to claim it.

But at the last second, the wet ball slipped through his gloves.

Time seemed to slow.

The ball bounced loose directly toward a Celtic striker who reacted instantly, smashing it into the empty net before Uche could recover.

The stadium erupted. Green smoke filled sections of the crowd while Celtic fans screamed in celebration.

Uche remained frozen on the muddy turf. The world around him suddenly sounded distant. His mistake. His fault.

At the sideline, television cameras immediately focused on his devastated expression. For a terrifying moment, panic threatened to consume him completely. Then something unexpected happened.

His captain, Rangers defender Connor McLeish, sprinted toward him immediately.

"Forget it!" Connor shouted firmly, grabbing Uche by both shoulders. "Lift your head!"

Another teammate slapped his back encouragingly, "We're still in this!"

Even from the sideline, Douglas Fraser's voice cut through the chaos, "Next action, Uche!"

Not next mistake. Next action. Uche inhaled deeply and slowly, he steadied himself. The response defined him.

Ten minutes later, Celtic nearly doubled their lead when a powerful header flew toward the top corner. Uche launched himself backward instinctively, fingertips barely pushing the ball over the crossbar.

The Rangers supporters roared loudly in appreciation. Confidence returned little by little. Then came other save: a low drive through crowded bodies, a dangerous one-on-one, a curling free kick and a close-range volley.

By halftime, Uche had already produced four major saves to keep Rangers alive.

The dressing room smelled of sweat, deep heat cream, and damp jerseys during the break.

Graeme Sinclair stood before the players intensely, "We're one goal down because of a mistake," he said firmly. "But we're still alive because of him too." He pointed toward Uche. Nobody argued.

The second half became war.

Rain intensified under the floodlights while tackles flew recklessly across the soaked pitch. Celtic attacked repeatedly, desperate to finish the match, but Uche grew stronger with every passing minute.

One particular save stunned the entire stadium. A Celtic striker broke clean through in the seventy-third minute after a defensive error. The crowd already began celebrating before the shot was even taken. But Uche exploded off his line fearlessly. The striker fired low. Uche spread himself brilliantly, blocking the effort with his leg before diving desperately onto the rebound. Even opposing supporters applauded.

By the final minutes, Rangers pushed desperately for an equalizer. Then, with only two minutes remaining, the miracle arrived. A corner swung dangerously into the Celtic box. Bodies collided violently. The ball ricocheted loose. Connor McLeish smashed it into the roof of the net.

Hampden Park erupted into

chaos. Blue scarves flew everywhere. Players sprinted wildly toward the corner flag. Rangers supporters screamed so loudly the stadium itself seemed to shake. 1-1.

Extra time followed. Exhaustion consumed everyone. Players cramped beneath the cold rain. Mud covered jerseys and faces. Yet neither side could find another goal. Finally came penalties.

The longest walk of Uche's life began as he moved slowly toward the goal in front of thousands of screaming supporters.

Rain dripped from his gloves. His breathing sounded unnaturally loud inside his head.

The first Celtic penalty flew into the net. Rangers scored theirs too.

Then came the second Celtic kick. Uche studied the taker carefully. The whistle blew. The striker aimed low to the left. Uche guessed perfectly. His body flew across the muddy turf before strong gloves pushed the ball away brilliantly.

The Rangers end exploded with noise.

Later came another save; this time high to the right. The entire stadium erupted into disbelief as Uche clawed the penalty away spectacularly.

Moments later, Rangers scored the winning kick. The final whistle disappeared beneath an avalanche of noise.

Players flooded toward Uche instantly, burying him beneath bodies, screams, and celebration. Blue smoke filled the air while Rangers supporters sang thunderously across Hampden Park.

The boy who had made a terrible error five minutes into the game had become the hero of the Scottish Cup final.

By morning, Scotland belonged to him. Newspapers carried massive headlines:

"NIGERIAN TEEN SAVES RANGERS"

"FROM ACADEMY UNKNOWN TO CUP HERO"

"UCHE THE UNBREAKABLE"

His face appeared across television screens, social media, and sports magazines throughout the country.

Two weeks later, Glasgow transformed again for the trophy parade.

Thousands lined the streets waving flags while open-top buses rolled slowly through roaring crowds. Music blasted across the city as supporters sang Uche's name repeatedly.

He stood near the front of the bus holding the Scottish Cup trophy while cold wind swept through his jacket. Yet even amidst all the fame and celebration, his thoughts still drifted home.

To his mother; to Sandra.

Now that Uche has gotten the fame, will he rescue Sandra and his mum?

AUTHOR of the WEEK Murasaki Shikibu

Murasaki Shikibu was a celebrated Japanese novelist, poet, and lady-in-waiting who flourished during the Heian period, around the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. She is best known as the author of *The Tale of Genji*, a literary masterpiece widely regarded as the world's first novel. Although many details of her life remain uncertain, her writings have immortalised her as one of the greatest figures in Japanese and world literature. Through her remarkable talent for storytelling and deep understanding of human nature, she produced a work that has captivated readers for over a thousand years.

Born into the distinguished Fujiwara clan, Murasaki Shikibu was the daughter of Fujiwara no Tametoki, a respected scholar and provincial governor. Unlike most women of her time, she received an excellent education because her father recognised her exceptional intelligence. She learned classical Chinese literature, poetry, and history—subjects generally reserved for men. This rare educational opportunity laid the foundation for her extraordinary literary career and enabled her to develop a writing style that was both elegant and intellectually rich.

The name "Murasaki Shikibu" was not her real name but a court nickname. "Murasaki" was inspired by one of the principal female characters in *The Tale of Genji*, while "Shikibu" referred to a government office associated with her father's position. Her actual birth name has never been recorded, a common occurrence for women of the Heian aristocracy. Despite this mystery, her literary achievements have ensured that her adopted name remains one of the most recognised in Japanese cultural history.

Murasaki married Fujiwara no Nobutaka, a nobleman much older than herself. Their marriage was relatively short, as her husband died only a few years later, leaving her a widow with a young daughter. The personal sorrow she experienced during this period is believed to have deepened her understanding of love, loss, and the complexities of human relationships. These emotions later became central themes in her literary works, particularly in her nuanced portrayal of court life and romance.

Following her husband's death, Murasaki entered the imperial court as a lady-in-waiting to Empress Shōshi. There, she became part of a sophisticated cultural environment where poetry, literature, and artistic refinement were highly valued. Her intelligence, literary skill, and graceful writing quickly earned her admiration among the court nobility. She also kept a detailed diary, now known as *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*, which provides historians with valuable insights into life, customs, and ceremonies in the Heian court.

Her greatest achievement, *The Tale of Genji*, is a monumental work consisting of 54 chapters that follows the life and romantic adventures of the noble Prince Genji. More than a simple romance, the novel explores themes of love, ambition, power, beauty, jealousy, and the impermanence of life. It is admired for its sophisticated character development, psychological depth, and subtle exploration of human emotions. Literary scholars often regard it as the first true psychological novel, influencing generations of writers both within Japan and around the world.

In addition to *The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki Shikibu made significant contributions to Japanese poetry and prose. Her diary and collection of waka poems reveal her keen powers of observation and mastery of language. Her writings vividly capture the elegance, etiquette, and emotional complexity of Heian society, making them invaluable historical as well as literary documents. Today, her works are studied in schools and universities across the globe and continue to inspire adaptations in film, television, theatre, manga, and visual arts.

Murasaki Shikibu's remarkable contributions to literature have ensured that her name remains immortal more than a thousand years after her lifetime. Revered as one of the world's earliest novelists, she transformed Japanese literature through her profound storytelling, psychological insight, and elegant prose. *The Tale of Genji* continues to be translated into numerous languages, studied by scholars, and celebrated as one of the greatest works of world literature. Her writings provide an invaluable window into the culture, politics, and daily life of Japan's Heian period while demonstrating the timeless nature of human emotions. Today, Murasaki Shikibu is remembered not only as a pioneering female author but also as a literary genius whose influence continues to inspire writers, historians, and readers across the world.

Foreign News

Scores Rescued After Boat Catches Fire In English Channel

More than 150 migrants were rescued early on Tuesday after the boat they were travelling in caught fire while trying to cross the English Channel from France to the United Kingdom.

French officials said the boat's engine caught fire, making the boat unsafe within a short time. As the situation became more dangerous, French and British coastguards quickly stepped in to help. A total of 157 people were rescued safely.

Earlier on Monday night, French rescue workers had already taken five people off the same boat. Rescue boats were following the journey because crossing the English Channel in small boats is very risky.

Every year, many migrants risk their lives trying to reach the UK in small, overcrowded boats. According to the Migration Observatory, at least 162 people died while trying to cross the Channel between 2018 and 2025. Most of these journeys are made in small inflatable boats, dinghies, or other boats that are not strong enough for rough seas.

The growing number of people crossing the Channel in small boats has become a major issue in the UK. It has pushed both the Conservative and Labour governments to introduce tougher immigration rules. It has also increased support for the right-wing political party, Reform UK.

Just two days before this rescue, Britain's Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, said his government would continue to work hard to stop illegal migration. He said security agencies would do more to stop criminal gangs that organise these dangerous trips. He also said the government should provide safe and legal ways for people to seek protection, which would reduce the power of the smuggling gangs.

Since 2018, tens of thousands of people have tried to make the dangerous journey across the Channel in search of safety or a better life in the UK. Many are fleeing war, violence, or persecution in countries such as Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iran, and Sudan.

French officials said many migrants refuse help when it is first offered because they are determined to reach Britain. They usually accept rescue only when their lives are in serious danger, such as when their boat catches fire or starts sinking.

The latest rescue shows how dangerous the English Channel crossing remains. It also highlights the ongoing challenge facing both France and the United Kingdom as they try to stop illegal migration while saving lives.



AI Exam Cheating Scandal Hits Mexican University

A major university in Mexico is facing a serious admission crisis after using artificial intelligence (AI) to stop cheating during its entrance examination. The technology was introduced to make the online test more secure and protect the integrity of the admission process. However, instead of bringing confidence, it has created confusion and left thousands of students uncertain about their future.

The university at the

centre of the controversy is the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), one of the country's largest and most respected institutions. Every year, thousands of students compete for a limited number of admission spaces, making the entrance examination highly competitive. This year was the first time the university conducted the examination online.

One of the affected candidates is Daniel Fernando García Velázquez.

He had tried three times to gain admission into UNAM without success. On each of those occasions, he travelled about 400 kilometres from his hometown of Veracruz to Mexico City because the university required all candidates to take the examination in person.

When the university announced that this year's examination would be held online, Velázquez still travelled to Mexico City to prepare properly. He was determined to succeed after years of trying and believed

this would finally be his opportunity to achieve his dream.

His efforts paid off. He scored 94 out of 120, a result that should have secured him admission to study Communication and Journalism at UNAM's Aragón School of Higher Studies. Instead of celebrating his success, he now finds himself waiting anxiously because the university has suspended admissions while it investigates a large-scale cheating scandal.

Entertainment News

Nobody Can Beat Me In a Free and Fair Election - Davido



Afrobeat superstar David Adeleke, popularly known as Davido, has said that no one can defeat him in a free and fair election in Nigeria if he decides to run for public office.

The award-winning singer, however, made it clear that he is not interested in contesting any political position for now. According to him, he has little confidence in Nigeria's electoral system because he believes elections are not always transparent.

Davido made the remarks during a recent livestream with popular content creator Carter Efe. During the discussion, he said he would rather focus on his music career until the country's electoral process becomes more open, fair, and credible.

When Carter Efe asked if he would like to become the governor of a state, Davido responded that he had no interest in participating in elections where results could be manipulated. He said he would not accept being cheated in an election and would rather stay away from politics under the current system.

The singer confidently stated that if Nigeria conducts truly free and fair elections, he believes no one can defeat him. He even claimed that he could win the country's presidential election under a transparent electoral process.

Davido also expressed concern about the credibility of elections in Nigeria and said he is closely watching the upcoming Osun State governorship election to see how it will be conducted. He added that many people are hoping for a more transparent and credible electoral process.

His comments have generated reactions on social media, with some people supporting his views on electoral transparency, while others see his statements as a bold expression of confidence in his popularity across the country.



Popular Nigerian TV host Frank Edoho has explained why the famous quiz show, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, stopped airing.

Speaking on the KK Show, Edoho said the programme ended because the

Why Who Wants To Be A Millionaire Ended - Frank Edoho

company sponsoring it pulled out after supporting it for about 10 years.

He explained that the company had to stop sponsoring the show after the Federal Government gave it a very large fine over a business-related issue. Because the company had to pay so much money, it could no longer afford to keep funding the programme.

Edoho said once the sponsor left, there was no money to continue producing the show, so it had to end.

He said, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire came to an end when our sponsor withdrew. They had supported the show for about 10 years. Then the Federal Government fined them over a business issue, and that affected their ability to continue sponsoring the programme."

"They told us, 'We can't continue because we have to pay a huge amount of money to the Federal Government.'"

Who Wants to Be a Millionaire was one of Nigeria's most loved TV quiz shows. It entertained millions of viewers and gave many contestants the chance to win life-changing cash prizes before it finally ended.

Sporting Ambassador



Kanu Nwankwo Grace 2026 OFUJI Unity Cup

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

The maiden edition of the OFUJI Unity Cup 2026 started in grand style recently at the Amaokwe Item Mini Stadium, with former Super Eagles captain and Chairman of Enyimba International Football Club, Kanu Nwankwo, leading dignitaries at the colourful opening ceremony.

The football championship, sponsored by Dr. Chimaobi Desmond Anyaso (OFUJI), is aimed at promoting unity among youths across the 13 wards of Bende Federal Constituency while providing a platform for discovering and nurturing young football talents.

The tournament was officially kicked off by the Abia State Commissioner for Agriculture, Dr. Cliff Agbaeze, alongside the Chairman of Bende Local Government Area, Deacon Bassey Uwabunkeonye, and the sponsor, Dr. Anyaso.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, Dr. Anyaso described the competition as more than a football tournament, saying it was conceived to strengthen unity among Bende youths, promote peaceful coexistence and expose talented players to greater opportunities.

He urged the participating teams to compete with discipline, fairness and sportsmanship, reminding them that although they would be rivals on the pitch, they remain brothers united by a



common heritage.

According to him, the winning team will receive a grand prize of ₦4 million, while the first runner-up will go home with ₦1 million. He added that each participating team would receive a consolation prize of ₦200,000.

The competition features 10 teams drawn into two groups, namely Umunna and Ikwisii. The participating teams are Item, Alayi,

Igbere, Itumbauzo, Ozuitem, Uzuakoli, Nkpa/Umuimenyi, Umuhu, Ugwueke and Bende.

Addressing newsmen, Kanu applauded Dr. Anyaso for initiating the tournament, describing it as a strategic investment in youth development and grassroots football.

He noted that engaging young people in sporting activities would help curb youth restiveness while

creating opportunities for talented players to realise their dreams.

"Dr. Chimaobi Desmond Anyaso is a good man who is passionate about empowering young people through sports," Kanu said.

The former African Footballer of the Year disclosed that he would be scouting outstanding talents during the tournament for possible recruitment into Enyimba

International Football Club and other clubs across the globe. He encouraged the players to give their best throughout the competition.

Also speaking, Commissioner for Agriculture, Dr. Cliff Agbaeze, commended Dr. Anyaso for bringing Bende youths together through football, describing the initiative as a unifying force capable of fostering lasting peace and development in the area.

He said the people of Bende had taken note of Dr. Anyaso's numerous contributions, particularly towards youth empowerment, and would appreciate such efforts at the appropriate time.

On his part, Bende Local Government Chairman, Deacon Bassey Uwabunkeonye, praised the sponsor for conceptualising the tournament and pledged the council's support towards sustaining the initiative in subsequent editions.

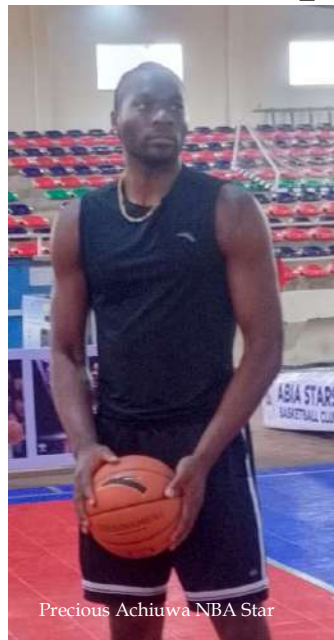
The opening match saw Ugwueke defeat Alayi 2-0, with Ogbonnaya Chinonso (Jersey No. 9) opening the scoring as Ugwueke secured the first victory of the competition.

The successful opening ceremony has set the stage for what promises to be an exciting tournament dedicated to fostering unity, promoting grassroots football and discovering the next generation of football stars from Bende Federal Constituency.

Abia State 2026 Crossover Foundation Basketball Camp in Pix



Participants on the court



Precious Achiuwa NBA Star



Achiuwa and other officials



Group Pix



Registration for the camp

NATIONAL Ambassador

"Uplift the people, project the nation"

₦250 VOL. 28 NO. 036

August 16, 2026.

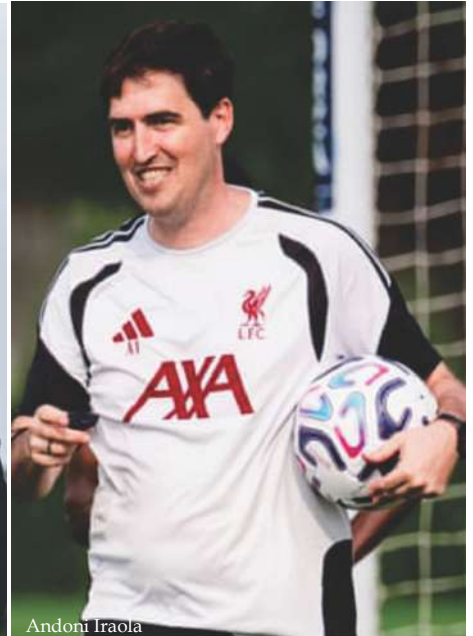
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Xabi Alonso



Matthias Jaissle



Andoni Iraola

2026/27 EPL Set for Historic Managerial Shake-Up

The 2026-27 Premier League campaign has yet to begin, but it has already entered the history books. For the first

time ever, nine clubs are preparing to start the season under new permanent managers, marking the biggest managerial overhaul before an opening weekend in the competition's history.

The unprecedented turnover has transformed the managerial landscape across England's top

flight, with nearly half of the league's clubs making changes in the dugout during the summer.

Among the biggest changes is at Liverpool, where Andoni Iraola has been appointed following the dismissal of Arne Slot. Meanwhile, Manchester City have ushered in a new era by naming Enzo Maresca as Pep Guardiola's successor after the Spaniard brought an end to his hugely successful spell at the Etihad Stadium.

Chelsea have also turned to a new face, appointing Xabi Alonso after Liam Rosenior's disappointing reign came to an end. Bournemouth replaced the departed Iraola with former RB Leipzig coach Marco Rose, while Nottingham Forest handed the reins to Oliver Glasner following the sacking of Vitor Pereira.

Crystal Palace moved quickly to appoint Pierre Sage after Glasner left upon the expiry of his contract. Fulham have named former Real Madrid defender Alvaro Arbeloa as their new manager after Marco Silva's contract expired, while newly promoted Ipswich Town

appointed Gary O'Neil following Kieran McKenna's resignation.

Newcastle United have completed the appointment of Matthias Jaissle after Eddie Howe stepped down, taking the total number of clubs beginning the new campaign with fresh permanent managers to a record-breaking nine.

The previous Premier League record was set ahead of the 2016-17 season, when eight clubs started the campaign under new management. That summer saw Pep Guardiola arrive at Manchester City and Antonio Conte take charge of Chelsea, with the Italian guiding the Blues to the Premier League title in his debut season. Earlier records included seven managerial changes before the 1995-96 campaign and six before the start of the 2012-13 season.

Beyond the record number of appointments, the new season is also expected to put the popular theory of the "new manager bounce" under the spotlight. The belief is that clubs often enjoy an immediate improvement after

changing coaches, driven by renewed confidence, tactical adjustments and a fresh psychological outlook.

The opening weekend could provide the perfect test of that theory. Three fixtures are expected to pit teams led by newly appointed managers against one another, with Fulham hosting Chelsea, Manchester City facing Bournemouth, and Newcastle United welcoming Liverpool. Each of those contests will feature sides still adjusting to new tactical philosophies and coaching methods.

Liverpool's opening run is particularly remarkable. Iraola's first six Premier League matches are all scheduled against teams managed by newly appointed permanent coaches. After the trip to Newcastle, the Reds will face Nottingham Forest, Ipswich Town, Fulham, Bournemouth and Manchester City, making it one of the most unusual starts to a Premier League season for any new manager.

Culled from BBC

SUDOKU

Puzzle By: Prince Blessing Lazarus

	8			3		4		
				5				1
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9								4
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	7	9	2					
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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.