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FG, DICAN Urge Adaptation Of China's Poverty Reduction Model

From Sophia Oronke, Abuja

The Federal Government and the Diplomatic Association of Nigeria (DICAN) have called for the adaptation of relevant lessons from China's poverty reduction experience to support Nigeria's efforts to tackle poverty and promote sustainable development.

The call was made at a strategic stakeholders' workshop organised by DICAN in Abuja, which brought together policymakers, diplomats, media practitioners and other stakeholders to examine China's development experience and its relevance to Nigeria.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amb. Dunoma Umar Ahmed, said Nigeria could learn from China's long-term approach to infrastructure development, agricultural productivity, targeted poverty reduction, social protection and human capital investment.

Represented by Kimi Ebienfa, Ahmed, however, cautioned against the wholesale adoption of the Chinese model, stressing that Nigeria must adapt relevant lessons to its political, economic, institutional and social realities.

He said transparency, accountability, effective implementation and continuous monitoring were essential to ensuring that development policies translated into measurable improvements in the lives of Nigerians.

Ahmed also urged development partners to provide technical expertise, financing and international experience in line with Nigeria's development priorities.

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Abia @ 35

Otti Commends Resilience, Urges Collective Efforts For Greater Future

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru

Governor Alex Otti has commended the resilience, ingenuity and determination of Abians, describing them as the driving force behind the State's development over the past 35 years.

Otti stated this in a statewide broadcast on Thursday August 27, 2026 to mark the 35th anniversary of Abia State, saying the milestone was an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of the State's founding fathers, past leaders and citizens while renewing commitment to a

better future.

The Governor paid tribute to the late Dr Ogburnyama Onu, Abia's first democratically elected governor, as well as his predecessors, Dr Orji Uzor Kalu, Chief Theodore Orji and Dr Okezie Ikpeazu, for their contributions to the State's political and

socio-economic development.

He also acknowledged the former military administrators who governed the State in its formative years, noting their contributions to infrastructure, peace and social stability.

Otti recalled the

contributions of prominent leaders who championed the agitation for Abia's creation, including the late Dr Michael Ibeonukara Okpara and Chief Benjamin Nwachukwu, alongside other political, traditional, religious and professional leaders.

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L-R: Managing Director, Nigerian Railway Corporation, Dr. Kayode Opeifa and Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, during the signing of an MoU to facilitate construction of an access road linking Okpara Square and Akanu Ibiam Street (Goods shed) to Bende Road in Umuahia recently.

Abia, NRC Sign MoU On Umuahia Railway Corridor Access Road

By Amaraachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Government and the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), have signed an agreement paving the way for the construction of an access road across the railway corridor in Umuahia.

The MoU, signed at the Governor's Office recently, will facilitate a road linking Okpara Square through Akanu Ibiam Street (Goods shed) to Bende Road, in a move aimed at improving connectivity and easing traffic in the state capital.

Speaking at the event, Governor Alex Otti

said the project forms part of his administration's plan to upgrade Umuahia's transport infrastructure and create an integrated transportation hub around the railway station and the Nnenna Otti Bus Terminal.

"By the time we integrate the mega station into the terminal, it will become a transportation hub", Governor Otti said.

The governor directed the Commissioners for Transport and Works, Dr Chimezie Ukaegbu and Otumchere Otti, as well as the General Manager of the Umuahia

Capital Development Authority (UCDA), Kingsley Agomuo, to work with other relevant agencies to commence the project promptly.

He also appealed to the NRC to increase train services between Port Harcourt and Aba, noting that the state was expanding its public transportation network.

Governor Otti further directed the UCDA to relocate the existing police station within the railway corridor to a temporary location and prepare an architectural design for a new railway station incorporating a police facility for submission to the NRC.

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He disclosed that former Military President, General Ibrahim Babangida, under whose administration Abia was created on August 27, 1991, had spoken with him and asked him to convey his goodwill to Abians.

The Governor said the States identity had been sustained by the resilience of its entrepreneurs, artisans, traders, professionals, teachers, civil servants, healthcare workers and other citizens whose creativity continues to drive economic activity.

"Abia, like every society through time, embodies the energy and optimism of the people who live in it. We do not give up," he said.

While celebrating the State's achievements, Otti cautioned against complacency, saying Abia will have significant work to do to fulfill the aspirations of its founding visionaries.

He said his administration would sustain investments in education, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, housing and information and communication technology to create opportunities and improve living standards.

According to him, the government's investments in the last three years have supported the recruitment and training of teachers and health workers, improved remuneration, development of smart schools and healthcare facilities, and expansion of primary healthcare across the State's 184 wards.

He reaffirmed the commitment of his administration to free and compulsory basic education, stressing that no child should be disadvantaged because of their parents' economic or social circumstances.

On infrastructure, Otti said more than 1,000 kilometres of roads had been fixed across urban and rural communities in the last three years to improve connectivity, productivity and investment.

He added that the government was expanding investment in agriculture to strengthen food security, create jobs and increase household incomes, while reforms in land administration were designed to boost confidence in the housing and real estate sector.

The Governor also disclosed that thousands of young people had benefited

from ICT training, while investments in digital infrastructure were being made to extend access to rural communities.

Otti highlighted the commencement of the payment of accumulated gratuity arrears dating back to 2003, assuring retirees that the government would continue clearing the backlog as resources became available.

He further announced that, going forward, workers leaving the State's service would receive their gratuities once the required documentation was completed.

The governor urged Abians to contribute to the State's development by paying taxes and statutory fees, supporting security agencies and resisting attempts by unscrupulous elements to undermine peace and progress.

"Abia is ours to build and thrive, and we are on the right track," he declared.

Otti thanked Abians for their sacrifices and resilience over the past 35 years, expressing confidence that the State was positioned for a more prosperous future. He prayed for continued peace, economic prosperity for Abia State and its people.

Ukwa West Will Vote For Governor Otti Again

By Okereke Kate

The former Mayor of Ukwu West Local Government Area of Abia State, Hon. Newman Azu, has declared that the people of Ukwu West are solidly behind Governor Alex Otti and will vote actively for him in the 2027 governorship election.

Azu stated this while speaking with journalists at his country home in Ukwu West as Abia State prepares to mark another anniversary of its creation.

The former mayor described his appointment by Governor Otti as an opportunity and a rare privilege to serve his people, saying he gave his best during his tenure.

He said it was the highest honour of his life to be given the opportunity by the Governor of Abia State to serve the people in the capacity of the first Mayor of Ukwu West.

For the first time in the history of Nigerian politics, it is something unique for people like me to be given the opportunity to serve and to be called upon to come back home to serve. It was a rare privilege, and I gave it my best shot like most of the other premier mayors'.

Azu commended Governor Otti for what he described as a transformation in the narrative of leadership and

governance in Abia, noting that the Gov. Alex Otti led administration had attracted recognition within and outside the state for an impactful leadership.

According to him, the anniversary provides an opportunity for Abians to reflect on the achievements of the administration and look forward to more development.

"Today, if you want to see good governance, you will come to Abia State. In infrastructural development, roads, regular power supply and improved healthcare system, everywhere is getting a wonderful touch."

"We are grateful to God and pray that God will guide and protect the Governor. From what he has done, we know that the state is in good hands and he will do more when voted again," he said.

The former mayor also highlighted some of the developments in Ukwu West, particularly the renewal of the Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ASOPADC), as well as the construction of the Obhiele-Uwaza Road, which he said, is very significant to the people of the area.

He described the road as a major intervention in the oil-producing area, while stressing that more development was still needed because of the peculiar challenges faced

by communities in oil-producing areas.

Azu also commended the present administration for interventions in schools and healthcare facilities across the state.

On the 2027 election, he said there was no serious competition to Governor Otti in Ukwu West, insisting that the area was already secured for the Governor's reelection.

"There is no competition against Governor Otti. This place is secured for his reelection. There is no shaking, we will deliver," Azu declared.

He urged Abians to remain confident in the Gov. Otti's administration, describing the state as being in safe hands.

Change of Name

I, formerly known and addressed as Uka Ogechi Happiness, now wish to be known and addressed as CHINDINA OGECHI HAPPINESS. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. Abia State Government and the general public should please take note.

I, formerly known and addressed as Okereke Kate, now wish to be known and addressed as ANOCHILI IFEOMA ASSUMPTA. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. Access Bank and Abia State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB) and the general public should please take note.

ANOKHILI IFEOMA ASSUMPTA.

Recognition of Name

This is to affirm that Onyiah Johnson Nwankwe, which was written in my Bank Verification Number (BVN) and my name Johnson Nwankwe, was written in my National Identification Number (NIN), are the same person. I now wish to be known and addressed as OKORAFOR MIRACLE CHINDINA. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. Access Bank and the general public should please take note.

ONOKHILI IFEOMA ASSUMPTA.

Addition of Name

This is to affirm that Miracle Okorafor and Okorafor Miracle Chindina are the same person, I now wish to be known and addressed as OKORAFOR MIRACLE CHINDINA. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note.

OKORAFOR MIRACLE CHINDINA.

Abia, NRC Sign MoU

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The Governor said the number of electric buses in the state had risen to 40, with an additional 30 expected.

"For us here, I'm sure you may have seen in the news that the new electric buses have come in, increasing the number to 40. Another 30 is on the way."

"So, that will be the bus covering the entire State. So, if we have the railway, including the other one I mentioned to you that I'm thinking about."

"We are working with brother governors in the Southeast to also integrate all our States on a rail network that will not belong to NRC, but will be supported largely by NRC. That's the way it works, everywhere in the world", Gov. Otti stated.

Governor Otti thanked the Managing Director for using Abia as an example to other states and for appointing Mr. Francis Ejike from Enugu State as the Regional Head of the Nigeria Railway in the South-East.

The NRC Managing Director, Kayode Opeifa, in his remarks earlier, had

said the corporation approved the project after the state fulfilled the required conditions, describing the MoU as an important step towards improving transportation infrastructure in Umahia.

Opeifa commended the Abia Government for following due process and

praised Governor Otti's infrastructure initiatives, citing the Nnema/Oti Bus Terminal as an example of the administration's commitment to modernising public transportation.

He said the partnership would enhance mobility, strengthen infrastructure and support economic activities in the state.

He noted that the media had a critical role to play in promoting public understanding of development policies, scrutinising government performance and strengthening accountability through accurate and responsible reporting.

Speaking on behalf of the Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Yu Dunhai, the Counsellor in the Economic and Commercial Office of the Chinese Embassy, Sun Xuekun, said China had lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty since the country's reform and opening up began in 1978.

He said China moved nearly 100 million rural residents out of poverty between 2012 and 2020, while 835 impoverished

counties and 128,000 villages were removed from poverty status.

According to him, China's success was driven by strong government support, targeted interventions, sustained economic growth and massive investments in infrastructure and social development.

Sun said China invested nearly 16 billion yuan in special poverty alleviation funds and deployed millions of officials and work-team members to support poverty reduction programmes.

The interventions, he said, included industrial development, relocation from inhospitable areas, educational support, ecological compensation and strengthened social

protection.

He added that investments in roads, electricity, water, telecommunications, education and healthcare helped address structural barriers to development.

DICAN Chairman, Idehai Frederick, said Nigeria should study China's experience and adapt aspects capable of producing results within its own environment.

He described the workshop as timely, noting that Nigeria's poverty challenge required practical solutions and a critical examination of development models that had achieved measurable results.

Frederick said lessons from China could help Nigeria strengthen data-

driven interventions, community-level development, electricity, water, telecommunications, mutually beneficial economic partnerships.

He also called for stronger media exchanges, fellowship opportunities and journalism training, as well as closer engagement between DICAN and the Chinese business community.

The DICAN Chairman further urged Nigeria to take advantage of China's zero-tariff policy for African exports by strengthening local supply chains, improving product standards and expanding competitive non-oil exports.

News

Otti Begins Payment Of N61.8bn Gratuity Arrears To Abia Retirees

By Amariachi Uzonwaku

Abia State Government has started the payment of outstanding gratuity to state and local government retirees.

A gratuity committee, established by the Otti-led administration, puts the total liability inherited and accumulated from 2001 to 2025 at N61.8 billion.

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okeye Kanu, disclosed this recently, while briefing journalists at the Government House, Umuahia, on the outcome of the State Executive Council meeting, presided over by Governor Alex Otti.

According to Prince Kanu, the gratuity committee was mandated to ascertain and validate the cumulative gratuity arrears owed to state and local government retirees from 2001 to 2025 and recommend feasible modalities and timelines for their payment.

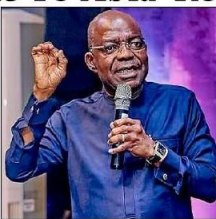
The commissioner noted that his review of records from the State Pensions Board and Local Government Pensions Board established an outstanding liability of N61.8 billion.

He said N7.2 billion of the liability accrued between 2001 and 2010, while N43.6 billion accumulated between 2011 and May 29, 2023, with N10.9 billion accrued from May 30, 2023, to the present.

Prince Kanu said the committee found that successive administrations, particularly those of former governors T.A. Orji and Okikezie Ikpeazu, had affected less than 0.01 per cent of gratuity payments to retirees who left the service between 2011 and May 2023.

"The committee established a comprehensive review that successive administrations in Abia State, particularly those of Governors T.A. Orji and Okikezie Ikpeazu, only affected less than 0.01% of gratuity payments to retirees who left the service between 2011 and May 2023."

"Specifically, upon review of records from the State Pensions Board and Local Government Pensions Board, the committee



Gov Alex Otti.

determined the total outstanding gratuity liability to be 61.8 billion, covering both state and local government retirees.

"So if you have to do a summary of the outstanding gratuities between 2001 and

2010, 7.2 billion. Between 2011 and 2023, ending May 29, 2023 was 43.6 billion."

"And May 30, 2023 to the present, 10.9 billion. That's how the total of 61.8 came about", the commissioner

explained.

He said the gratuity committee, after considering the size of the liability, the prolonged hardship suffered by retirees and the state's financial capacity, recommended that the annual financial impact of the payments from 2001 to 2021 be incorporated into the state's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and subsequent annual budgets.

Prince Kanu said that the measure was designed to ensure sustained payments and prevent further accumulation of gratuity arrears.

The commissioner added that payments would be made directly to verified beneficiaries through a dedicated gratuity payment platform linked to the state's Treasury Single Account, with biometric validation to prevent duplication and fraud.

He said that the state government would also prioritize the oldest arrears

and spread payments across subsequent years, according to their impact on annual expenditure and social needs.

According to Prince Kanu, it will be very difficult for this administration to clean up the whole mess of 24 years in three years. 24 years of misrule and maladministration that has brought us to this present state.

He, however, assured retirees that the Otti-led government would continue to address their concerns, noting that some beneficiaries had already received their final gratuity payments.

To address complaints arising from the exercise, Prince Kanu said the state government established a dedicated grievance redress mechanism at the State Citizens Contact Centre (0800 000 0022).

He added that the hotline will be available from 8am to 6pm on working days, while complaints can also be submitted through contactcentre@abiastate.gov.ng, which would operate 24 hours.

Over 200 Stakeholders To Brainstorm On Future Of Tourism In Akwalbom

From Lovina Enole, Uyo

About 200 stakeholders, including investors, government officials, hoteliers, transport operators, academic, and media practitioners, are expected to participate in a roundtable discussion which will help usher in integrated tourism ecosystem and track implementation beyond the event in Akwalbom State.

A press statement jointly signed by the Chairman, Nigeria Hotels Association (NHA), Akwalbom State Chapter; Obeng Daniel Udoh, Chairman, Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria (FTAN), Akwalbom State Chapter; Sir Joseph Umoh and the Chairman/CEO, Legacy Tourism Development Services, Akwalbom State, said they are mobilizing stakeholders to reposition the state as Nigeria's leading tourism and hospitality destination through a high-level dialogue scheduled for Tuesday, September 1, 2026, at CEDAPLEG Hotels, Uyo.

They highlighted that the roundtable is a bold step aimed at complementing the enormous tourism and hospitality investment being implemented under the ARISE Agenda of the administration of Pastor Umoineke, the Executive Governor of Akwalbom State.

With the theme "Repositioning Akwalbom State as Nigeria's Preferred Tourism and Hospitality Destination" and tagline "Unlocking Destination Akwalbom," the event aims to shift focus from the state's tourism potential to measurable performance, investment attraction, and economic impact.

Former Minister of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, High Chief Edem Duke, will deliver the keynote address while the former Secretary to the Akwalbom State Government (NSC) Dr. Emmanuel Okunwande, former President of the Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria (ATCON), will serve as the Chairman of the event while veteran journalist and media consultant, Mr. Ehinifunmi will moderate proceedings.

The organizers maintained that Akwalbom is blessed with hospitality infrastructure, cultural heritage, cuisine, and improved aviation connectivity, but the challenge remains organization, marketing, and monetization.

Key areas for discussion at the one-day conclave include destination branding, tourism investment, hospitality standards, business and events tourism, community participation, youth and women entrepreneurship, and sustainable tourism.

Abia Assembly Passes Four Landmark Laws

By Chijioke Chukwuemeka

The Abia State House of Assembly has roundly affirmed its legislative activities with the passage of four landmark bills into law, consideration of petitions, and key committee reports, before proceeding on its annual recess.

The Assembly, at its plenary on August 5, 2026, passed the Abia State Property and Tenancy Regulatory Authority Bill, the Abia State Criminal Justice Bill, the Abia State Administration of Criminal Justice Bill and the Abia State Restorative Justice Bill.

The four legislations, which were considered by the Committee of the Whole, are aimed at strengthening the criminal justice system, improving access to justice, regulating the property and tenancy sector and promoting social order across the state.

Speaking after the passage, the Speaker of the House, Rt. Hon. Emmanuel Emeruwa, congratulated the Assembly on what he described as another significant legislative milestone, expressing confidence that the new laws would contribute to improved governance, justice delivery and social stability in Abia.

He said the laws would take effect from August 3, 2026, upon receiving the assent of the Governor.

The Abia State Criminal Law Bill, Administration of Criminal Justice Bill and Restorative Justice Bill were sponsored by the Majority Leader and member representing Archchukuwa State Constituency, Hon. Okonkwo Chukwuemeka.

During debates on the

bills, Kalu described the Criminal Law Bill as a "child of necessity," arguing that the existing law had become outdated and no longer adequate to reflect the realities of contemporary society.

He explained that the new legislation would address existing legal gaps, strengthen the protection of lives and property and provide a more effective legal framework for tackling crime in the state.

On the Administration of Criminal Justice Bill, Kalu said it was designed to accelerate the disposal of criminal cases, improve the efficiency of the justice system, protect the rights of complainants, defendants, suspects and witnesses, and guarantee fair hearing for all parties.

He said the Restorative Justice Bill would introduce a victim-centred approach to justice by ensuring that victims receive appropriate remedies while offenders are held accountable for the harm caused.

According to him, the legislation would also promote reconciliation, healing and lasting peace within communities.

The Property and Tenancy Regulatory Authority Bill, jointly sponsored by the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Augustine Okozie, and the member representing Offa North State Constituency, Hon. Mandia Obasi, establishes the Abia State Property and Tenancy Regulatory Authority.

The legislation is expected to regulate real estate practice, protect the rights of landlords and

tenants, supervise the activities of property agents and address other challenges within the housing sector.

The House also gave first reading to the Abia State Environmental Management (Amendment No. 3) Bill, 2026, sponsored by the Deputy Speaker.

Also during the sitting, the Assembly considered a petition by Mrs. Elizabeth Uchechukwu seeking the recovery of Plot No. R/127 at Government Station Layout, allegedly allocated to her for residential purposes.

The report of the Joint Committee on Lands and Housing and Public Petitions, presented by Okozie, was adopted as the House's working document and referred to the Committee of the Whole for further legislative action.

The Assembly also received the Abia State Financial Statement for the year ended 2025, submitted by the Accountant-General of the State. The document was referred to the House into the committees of Finance for detailed scrutiny.

In another development, the House on August 18, 2026, plenary entertained a petition by Chikodiluvonwe seeking an independent investigation into the alleged cases of Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project (NEMWAP) in Abia State.

The petitioner levelled allegations of maladministration, among other complaints, against the Project Coordinator, Dr. Nkiruka Okonkwo.

The petition, presented by the member representing Umuahia North State Constituency, Hon. Adoniran

Alakiri, was referred to the House Committee on Public Petitions to conduct an investigation within one month to investigate the allegations and report back to the House for further legislative action.

Meanwhile, lawmakers used their personal engagements to commend Governor Alex Otti on ongoing infrastructure projects across the state.

The member representing Ikwano State Constituency, Hon. Isienyi Boniface, commended the governor for the ongoing rehabilitation of the Iko-Ekpe Federal Road and the Ariamulaka Ring Road project in his constituency.

Similarly, Deputy Speaker Okozie praised the administration for its robust control measures at various sites across the state, particularly in his constituency, where he said interventions were being implemented under the Capital Development Authority and the Ministry of Environment.

He expressed optimism that the ongoing rehabilitation of the Iko-Ekpe Road would be completed before the Yuletide, citing the pace of work at the project site.

The House further received the report of its Committee on Health on advocacy for the leadership of the Abia State Local Government Health Authorities (ABLGHA) and primary health centres.

The report, presented by the Chairman of the Committee on Health, Hon. Ekekeobi, was committed to the Committee of the Whole for further legislative action.

News

Bayelsa Empowers 600 Entrepreneurs With N90m, Business Support Packages

From Onwuna Goodness, Bayelsa

The Bayelsa State Government has disbursed N90 million to 600 young entrepreneurs as part of efforts to strengthen small businesses and promote self-reliance among youths and women in the state.

Each beneficiary received N150,000 in business support, alongside a Point-of-Sale (POS) terminal, after successfully completing training and registration under the DouyeDiri Skills Acquisition and Empowerment Programme at the Federal University Otuoke.

The empowerment was announced during the activities marking the 2026 World Entrepreneurship Day at the Chief DSP Alamiyeseigha Memorial Banquet Hall, Government House, Yenagoa.

Speaking at the event, Governor DouyeDiri said, his administration would continue to support initiatives capable of creating jobs, strengthening indigenous businesses and reducing capital flight from the state.

The governor, who was represented by his deputy, Dr. Peter Akpe, said, skills acquisition and entrepreneurship development remained critical to addressing unemployment and promoting economic growth.

Dr urged educational authorities to incorporate practical skills acquisition into school curricula, stressing that entrepreneurship should become a core component of education.

According to him, young people should acquire vocational skills alongside formal education, so they could have alternative means of livelihood where white-collar employment opportunities were limited.

"Entrepreneurship education, training and development targets blue-collar jobs by turning ideas into opportunities for job creation.

"At the policy level, government's major duty remains that of creating a conducive environment for businesses to grow and thrive.

"I will encourage our youths to learn something, they can fall back on when white-collar jobs are not forthcoming. Skills acquisition is the solution to capital flight in our state," he stated.

The governor also called on residents to patronise locally made products, saying increased patronage of indigenous businesses would help sustain enterprises and strengthen the state's economy.

He commended his Technical Adviser on Entrepreneurship Development, Mrs Charity Kense-Godwin, for her commitment and leadership in driving the empowerment programme.

He further urged the beneficiaries to remain consistent and resilient, noting that successful businesses were built through dedication and perseverance.

Earlier, Kense-Godwin said, the event was organised to recognise and empower 600 outstanding beneficiaries of the DouyeDiri skills development initiative.

She disclosed that, more than 5,000 Bayelsans had so far been trained and equipped with various vocational and entrepreneurial skills under the programme.

According to her, her office had also facilitated the registration of about 2,000 businesses owned by Bayelsans with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN).

"More than 32,000 applications had been received from the eight local government areas of the state ahead of the fourth phase of the empowerment programme. The growing number of applications reflected the increasing interest of Bayelsans in acquiring skills and establishing sustainable businesses," she said.

Abia Labour Party Meets 316 Support Groups Ahead of 2027 Elections

By Faith Hemonyichukwu

The State Working Committee (SWC) of the Labour Party, Abia State Chapter, has met with representatives of 316 pro-groups and other political groups that have registered to work with the party ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The meeting was mainly to bring the groups together explain their roles and discuss how they can work with the party as the 2027 elections approach.

The Labour Party opened an online registration portal on July 14, 2026, for pro-groups, political groups and other organisations that wanted to work with the party. Since the portal was opened, more than 316 groups have registered and shown interest in supporting Labour Party candidates in the 2027 elections.

Speaking at the meeting, the State Chairman of the Labour Party in Abia, Hon. Peter Azubuike, said the meeting was important because the party needed to explain to the groups how they could work together.



Hon. Peter Azubuike,

Azubuike said the Labour Party was ready to welcome individuals and groups who were serious about working for the success of the party and its candidates.

He said the party did not want different groups to work separately or create different camps. Instead, he said the aim was to bring everyone together and build one strong team for the 2027 elections.

The chairman also said every group working with the Labour Party must be ready to support the party and all its candidates.

He assured the groups that those who were active and committed would be properly included in the party's activities and campaign structure when the campaign begins.

Azubuike asked the groups to return to their communities and continue mobilising their members and supporters for Governor Alex Chioma Oti and other Labour Party candidates.

He said a strong Labour Party was important to the continued development of Abia State and the success of

the "New Abia" vision of the Oti administration.

According to him, Governor Oti would need people elected on the Labour Party platform at different levels of government to support his programmes and help move Abia forward.

The Chairman also said the State Working Committee would continue to monitor the activities of the registered groups to ensure that they remain committed to the party's goals.

During the meeting, representatives of the groups asked questions and raised concerns about voter mobilisation, protection of votes, security and how the groups would be properly recognised and involved in the party's activities.

In response, Azubuike assured them that the party would follow the law and work with the relevant authorities and other stakeholders to support a peaceful and credible election.

He urged the groups to concentrate on mobilising voters, building the party at the grassroots and encouraging their members and supporters to take part in the 2027 elections.

At the end of the meeting, the 316 registered Pro-Groups unanimously endorsed the Labour Party and all its candidates for the 2027 general elections.

The groups promised to mobilise their members and supporters across Abia State to support Labour Party candidates contesting for the House of Assembly, House of Representatives, Senate and governorship positions.

The State Working Committee also presented Certificates of Recognition to the 316 registered pro-groups.

The representatives welcomed the certificates, saying they would make them feel more recognised and strengthen their relationship with the Labour Party.

The Labour Party, Abia State Chapter, said it would continue to work closely with the groups and other stakeholders as it prepares for the 2027 elections.

The party called on its members, support groups and other stakeholders to remain united and focused as they work to strengthen the party at the grassroots and support the development of Abia State ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Govt Resolves ABSU-ASUU Strike, Approves New Salary Scale For Workers

By Amarachi Uzonkwa

The Abia State Government has said that it has resolved the issues that led to the recent strike by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Abia State University Uturu Chapter.

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kana disclosed this recently, while briefing journalists at Government House Umuahia, on the outcome of the previous State Executive Council meeting, presided over by Governor Alex Oti.

Prince Kana said the industrial action was triggered by concerns relating to staff welfare, including outstanding check-off dues and salary-related matters.

The commissioner said that Governor Oti had approved the union's demands as far back as April 2026, but implementation was delayed by administrative processes.

According to him, the governor last week directed the Secretary to the State Government-led committee to resolve the issues within 48 hours.

Prince Kana disclosed that outstanding check-off dues had been paid, while a new salary scale and related academic allowances had been processed for payment with the August 2026 salary.

He added that the new salary scale for other categories of staff of Abia State University has also been processed and would be paid in August.

Following the intervention of the SSU-led committee, the issues that led to the strike had

now been resolved.

"In particular, outstanding check-off dues have been paid and a new salary scale, consolidating academic, student teaching, allowance and other related payments have been addressed and will be paid with the August 2026 salary on the affected workers."

"And the August salary of those workers is expected to drop any time soon."

"The new salary scale for other staff at the Abia State University have also been processed and will be paid in this month, this August."

"Consequently, it is safe to assume that all the issues regarding the action by ASUU have been concluded and resolved", the commissioner stated.

He said the development demonstrates the Oti led administration's commitment to workers' welfare and constructive engagement with the organised labour.

"This development further demonstrates His Excellency's regard for workers' welfare."

"The governor's immediate directive that the matter be resolved within 48 hours, even though the necessary approvals have already been granted in April, is a clear demonstration of the governor's responsiveness to legitimate workers' concerns."

"This administration remains committed to constructive engagements with ASUU and other organized labour unions, while ensuring that workers' welfare remains a priority of the administration", Prince Kana said.

Editorial

Abia At 35: A Time For Celebration, Reflection And Renewal

As Abia State marks 35 years of its creation, the anniversary should be celebrated not merely as a remembrance of August 27, 1991, but as an important moment to reflect on the journey of a people, assess the present and recommit to the future.

Created from the old Imo State, with Umuahia as its capital and Abia as its commercial nerve centre, Abia was founded on a vision of unity, equity, enterprise and development. The State's rich heritage proclaims its political creation, drawing strength from the history of Arochuku, the enterprise of Aba, the agricultural communities of its hinterland and the intellectual and professional accomplishments of its people.

Thirty-five years later, Abia has travelled a long and sometimes difficult road. From the pioneering efforts required to establish the institutions of a new State to successive military and democratic administrations, the journey has witnessed achievements, missed opportunities, challenges and renewed aspirations.

The most enduring lesson of this history is that Abia's greatest asset has always been its people.

The spirit of enterprise remains visible in Aba, where generations of traders, artisans, shoemakers, garment manufacturers and fabricators have built one of Nigeria's most recognisable indigenous industrial cultures. "Made in Aba" has become more than a slogan; it represents creativity, resilience and the determination to produce value from local talent.

That entrepreneurial strength must remain central to the next phase of Abia's development.

At 35, the State must therefore look beyond ceremonial celebrations and ask fundamental questions: Have we sufficiently harnessed our human resources? Have we created the infrastructure required for enterprise to flourish? Are our schools preparing young people for a changing world? Are our hospitals, roads and public institutions meeting the expectations of citizens?

These are questions that should guide public policy beyond anniversary speeches.

The current administration of Governor Alex Otti has, within the last three years, planned renewed

emphasis on infrastructure, public service reforms, healthcare, education, transportation, power and economic development. The government says hundreds of road projects have been completed or are nearing completion, while investments have also been directed towards healthcare personnel and facilities, schools and technology-driven youth development.

The significance of these efforts lies not only in the projects themselves but in the broader challenge of rebuilding public confidence. Development must be measured by how effectively government improves everyday life—whether the farmer can move produce to market, whether the trader can do business, whether the child can learn, whether the sick can access quality care and whether young people can find opportunities at home.

Abia's future must also be anchored on economic productivity. The State cannot rely solely on public spending. It must continue to create an environment that attracts private investment, supports manufacturing, expands agriculture and strengthens small and medium-scale enterprises.

Reliable infrastructure is critical to this ambition. Roads must connect communities to markets. Electricity must power industries. Technology must create opportunities for a younger generation. Public institutions must be transparent, efficient and accountable.

There is equally a need to ensure that development reaches every part of the State. The Abia project cannot be complete if progress is concentrated only in major urban centres. Rural communities deserve quality roads, healthcare, education, security and economic opportunities.

At 35, Abia must also preserve the values that inspired its creation—unity, fairness and a shared sense of belonging. Political differences must never become greater than the collective interest of the State. The prosperity of Abia should complement the growth of Umuahia and the development of every community across the 17 Local Government Areas.

The anniversary is therefore both a celebration and a challenge.

Abia has survived difficult periods. Its people have remained resilient. Its entrepreneurial flame continues to burn. Its intellectual and human capital remain enormous.

The task before this generation is to convert those strengths into lasting prosperity.

The next chapter of Abia's story must be about building a State where government works, enterprise flourishes and every citizen has a stake in progress.

That is the true meaning of 35 years.
Happy 35th Anniversary, Abia State.
Our history. Our heritage. Our shared destiny.

LETTERS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO:

THE EDITOR

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Dr Alex Otti Deserves Commendation For Paying Abia Pensioners' 2001-2010 Gratuities

Dear Editor

I wish to use the widely read National Ambassador Newspaper to sincerely commend the Executive Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Otti, for his administration's efforts in paying the outstanding gratuities owed to pensioners.

This is an important development that deserves public recognition. For many years, these retired workers waited patiently for the money they were entitled to after spending several years serving the State. Many of them went through difficult times because their gratuities were not paid when they needed them most.

Retirement should be a period when people enjoy some peace after years of hard work and service. Unfortunately, many of our pensioners had to continue struggling because they were still waiting for their gratuities by former PDP government. Some could not properly take care of their health, while others found it difficult to support their families or meet other important financial responsibilities.

The payment of these outstanding gratuities will bring great relief to the beneficiaries. For a pensioner who has waited for many years, receiving the money can mean the difference between continuing to struggle and having some financial stability.

The money will also help many pensioners settle important debts and family responsibilities. Some may use it to pay medical bills, repair their houses, buy food, support their children and grandchildren, or invest in small businesses that can provide them with additional income.

Beyond the individual beneficiaries, the payment will also have a positive effect on the economy of Abia State. When pensioners receive their money, they will spend it on goods and services. Traders, pharmacists, artisans, transporters, landlords and other small business owners can benefit as the money moves through the local economy.

More importantly, the payment sends a strong message that the service of government workers should not be forgotten after retirement. People who spent their productive years working for the state deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Government is not only about building roads, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure. It is also about improving the lives of the people. A government that remembers its pensioners and takes steps to clear legitimate financial obligations is also contributing to the welfare and dignity of its citizens.

I therefore commend Governor Alex Otti for giving attention to this long-standing issue. While there may still be other challenges and outstanding obligations, this payment represents a major step in the right direction.

I appeal to the Governor to sustain the effort and ensure that all verified outstanding pension and gratuity obligations are gradually addressed. I also encourage the pensioners who have received their money to use it wisely, especially on their health, family needs and other areas that will improve their quality of life.

For many of these senior citizens, the money is not simply an amount being paid by government. It represents years of service, sacrifice, patience and hope. Receiving it after such a long wait will surely bring happiness and renewed confidence to many families.

I believe that recognising and appreciating those who served Abia State is a responsibility that should be shared by everyone. Our pensioners built institutions, educated young people, provided essential services and contributed to the development of the state. They deserve to enjoy their retirement with dignity.

Once again, I commend Governor Alex Otti and his administration for this intervention. The payment of the 2001-2010 gratuities is a welcome development that will positively affect the lives of many Abia pensioners and their families.

I hope this effort will continue and that the welfare of pensioners will remain an important part of the government's agenda.

Ikemanyi Ogidi
Writes from Umuahia

NATIONAL
Ambassador
"Lift the people, project the nation"

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Stakeholders Urge Action On Humanitarianism

Representing Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti, the Senior Special Assistant on International

The stakeholders agreed that humanitarianism must move beyond conferences, titles and declarations and find practical expression in governance, institutions, communities and everyday conduct.

Economists, Oil Marketers Differ Over Fuel Subsidy Return

However, the administration also disclosed that substantial funds were subsequently spent on wage

President Bola Tinubu

He called for savings from subsidy removal to be

Gillis-Harry said restoring the policy would amount to reversing reforms aimed at strengthening Nigeria's economy and questioned how a future government would sustainably finance significantly lower petrol prices.

As the 2027 elections approach, the debate is expected to intensify over whether Nigeria should return to fuel subsidy, retain full deregulation or adopt a more targeted system of support for vulnerable households and key productive sectors.

Nigeria, Thailand Deepen Economic Co-operation

Speaking at the ceremony, Odumegwu-Ojukwu said Nigeria was seeking to elevate its relationship with Thailand to a strategic partnership anchored on expanded trade, investment and technical cooperation.

Odumegwu-Ojukwu said Nigeria was keen on diversifying bilateral trade beyond crude oil, rice and agricultural machinery, calling for increased Thai investment and joint ventures in agro-processing.

Nigeria also called for stronger engagement between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Economic Community of West

The new MoU is expected to provide a framework for deeper technical and economic cooperation as both countries seek to broaden their bilateral relationship and unlock new investment opportunities.

Interview

Abia @ 35 Trade, Commerce And The Drive Towards A Modern Economy

As Abia State marks its 35th anniversary on Thursday, August 27, 2026, attention is focused on the transformation of its business landscape, particularly efforts to modernise markets, empower entrepreneurs, promote Aba-made products and attract fresh investments.

In this exclusive interview, the Honourable Commissioner for Trade and Commerce, Dr. Mrs. Salome Nkemakolam Obiaku, speaks with the Editor, Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Dr. Chikweike Egeria, anip, on the gains recorded under the Governor Alex Chima Oti's administration, the growing opportunities for SMEs and manufacturers, and plans to position Abia as a leading hub for trade, industry and investment.

Excerpts:

Abia marks its 35th anniversary on Thursday, August 27, 2026. How would you assess the growth and development of trade and commerce in the state over these years?

Trade and commerce have remained central to the economic identity of Abia State, with Aba serving as a major commercial and manufacturing hub. Over the years, the sector has grown, but under the leadership of Governor Dr. Alex Chima Oti, OFR, we have witnessed deliberate efforts to reposition trade and commerce and create a more conducive environment for businesses to thrive.

One major area of intervention is the remodelling and modernisation of markets, especially Ariaria International Market, while work is ongoing at Ekeocha Market, among others. Years ago, particularly during the rainy season, many markets were difficult to access and operate in because of poor infrastructure, congestion and environmental challenges.

Today, the transformation is evident. The remodelled markets now provide improved facilities and a more conducive environment for traders and customers.

At Ekeocha Market, Aba, for instance, the difference is clear. Previously, the environment was congested, disorganised and characterised by dilapidated structures. Movement was difficult, while many traders operated in small and uncomfortable spaces.

Today, the remodelled sections provide more standardised shop spaces, improved facilities and a better trading environment. The transformation is restoring confidence and making the markets more attractive for commercial activities.

The objective is to develop modern markets that can attract traders, buyers and investors from different parts of Nigeria and beyond.

In concrete terms, what would you describe as the major achievements of the Ministry of Trade and Commerce under the present administration?

The ministry has made significant progress, particularly in capacity building and improving the general business environment.

We have continued to organise training and capacity-building programmes to help traders and entrepreneurs understand modern business operations and take advantage of emerging market opportunities.

There has also been progress in improving digital transactions in the markets. In the past, network challenges made electronic transactions difficult in

some locations. However, through engagements with market leaders and relevant stakeholders, efforts have been made to improve connectivity and make digital transactions easier.

Another important achievement is the restoration of sanity, peace and order in the markets. The present market leadership is working with government to maintain discipline and create an environment where people can buy and sell with greater ease.

The ministry is also pursuing policies and partnerships that will strengthen commerce, support manufacturers and expand opportunities for entrepreneurs across the state.

Is the government doing anything to support Small and Medium Enterprises, especially in Aba, to grow and create more jobs?

Yes. Supporting SMEs is a major priority because they are critical to job creation and economic development.

We are building partnerships with relevant organisations and development partners to provide greater support for small and medium-scale enterprises.

Recently, we were in Abaja to engage

Years ago, particularly during the rainy season, many markets were difficult to access and operate in because of poor infrastructure, congestion and environmental challenges.

donor agencies and other stakeholders on possible partnerships that can help empower SMEs and strengthen their businesses.

The goal is to provide the necessary support that will enable entrepreneurs to expand, become more competitive and create additional employment opportunities. We believe these engagements will yield positive results in the near future.

Aba is widely known for the production of Aba-made goods. What is the government doing to promote local industries and expand their access to national and international markets?

One of the major initiatives in this regard is the establishment of the Aba Export Growth Lab.

The first cohort of entrepreneurs has completed its training, with more than 25 companies participating. They have undergone processes aimed at preparing them for export opportunities, and a good number have been certified as export-ready.

The second cohort is also ongoing.

The Aba Export Growth Lab is specifically designed to help manufacturers and entrepreneurs improve their products, understand export requirements and position Aba-made goods for international markets.

We are also working with relevant institutions, including the Nigerian Export Promotion Council and the Standards Organisation of Nigeria, to expand certification opportunities and ensure that more entrepreneurs can meet the required quality and international standards.

The vision is clear: Aba-made products

should not only compete successfully in local markets but also gain greater access to African and global markets.

What measures are being taken to attract investors and improve the ease of doing business in Abia State?

Governor Alex Oti has made substantial interventions aimed at creating an enabling environment for investment.

Security is one of the most important considerations for investors, and the state has strengthened its security architecture. Investors and visitors can now have greater confidence in coming into the state to conduct legitimate businesses.

Infrastructure is another critical factor. Years ago, travelling into and around Aba was a major challenge because of poor roads, and many businesses were negatively affected.

Today, significant improvements have been made to major roads and other infrastructure, making movement easier and reducing the difficulties associated with doing business.

These improvements in security, infrastructure and governance are helping

family responsibilities and contribute meaningfully to the economy.

There were periods in the past when workers faced serious challenges arising from unpaid salaries and other obligations. The current consistency has brought relief and renewed hope.

Many workers now appreciate the reforms of the present administration and believe that sustained support will enable government to consolidate the progress already made.

What is your message to Governor Alex Oti as he continues his efforts to reposition Abia through reforms and development initiatives?

My message to His Excellency is that the people of Abia appreciate the work he is doing and should continue to support him. I commend him for the bold reforms across different sectors of the state. He has done creditably, and Abians should support him to sustain the ongoing strides.

We pray that God will grant him the strength, wisdom and grace to continue the good work. There is still much to be done, but the foundation being laid is important.

Our hope is that the reforms and development initiatives will continue to be consolidated so that Abia can become one of the most attractive places to live, work, invest and do business in Nigeria.

What major programmes should traders, manufacturers, investors and the public look forward to in the coming months?

One major programme is the forthcoming Aba International Trade Fair, being organised by the Ministry in conjunction with the Aba Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (ACCIMA).

The trade fair is scheduled to hold from November 27 to December 6, 2026, at the Ogburnia Ona Polytechnic, Aba.

It will provide an important platform for businesses, manufacturers, investors and entrepreneurs from different parts of Nigeria and other countries to meet, interact and explore opportunities.

We are also partnering with foreign companies, including a Chinese firm expected to participate alongside other businesses in the areas of trade and technology.

Aba-made products will occupy a prominent place at the fair, giving manufacturers and entrepreneurs the opportunity to showcase their products to national and international audiences.

The fair will also create opportunities for direct contacts and partnerships among manufacturers, investors and captains of industry. There will be conference sessions and business engagements involving leaders from different sectors of the economy.

The objective is to expose investors to the opportunities available in Abia and highlight the efforts of the state government in trade facilitation and investment promotion.

The timing is strategic because it is close to the Christmas season, when commercial activities are expected to increase. Businesses and consumers will have opportunities to source goods, establish new commercial relationships and explore investment opportunities.

Most importantly, the trade fair will serve as a meeting point for local manufacturers, exporters, investors and international partners. It is expected to open new doors for collaboration, investment and market expansion.

We believe that the 2026 Aba International Trade Fair will be a major platform for projecting Aba-made products to the world and reinforcing Aba's position as a leading destination for trade,

Concluded



Commissioner for Trade and Commerce, Dr. Mrs. Salome Nkemakolam Obiaku.

News

NYCN Rekindles Activities In Abia

The Abia State chapter of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) has resumed full activities following the resolution of challenges that had disrupted its operations.

The development was announced at a management meeting attended by members of the executive, directors, local government coordinators and other key stakeholders.

The meeting focused on the council's revival, youth development, leadership and the way forward, while former leaders were recognised for their contributions to the organisation.

Speaking at the meeting, the Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Hon. Nwaobili Ananaba, commended the NYCN Chairman in Abia State, Engr. Smith Sylvanus, and his executive for their efforts in reviving the council.

Ananaba also lauded Governor Alex Chibueze for his commitment to youth welfare and development, assuring the council of his support in advancing its activities.

He urged members to remain committed to the ideals and responsibilities of the organisation and acknowledge the efforts of the state government towards youth development.

In his welcome address, the Abia State Chairman, Comrade Smith Sylvanus, expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the meeting and welcomed stakeholders who converged from across the state.

He described the NYCN as a structured organisation committed to youth development and sustainable progress, noting that the management meeting serves as the council's highest decision-making platform.

According to him, the meeting provides an opportunity for representatives to deliberate on issues affecting the organisation and take decisions that would guide its activities.

Sylvanus said the meeting was particularly significant as it coincided with the period of the International Youth Day, providing an avenue for stakeholders to reflect on the growth and future of the council.

He acknowledged that the organisation had faced challenges and distractions that affected its operations but said the issues had been resolved, with the council steadily returning to full

activities.

The chairman thanked stakeholders for their prayers, calls and messages of support during the difficult period, describing their encouragement as instrumental to the council's recovery.

He also urged members to conduct themselves responsibly, stressing that management meetings were serious platforms where representatives were expected to speak and act in the interest of their respective local governments, organisations and constituencies.

A major highlight of the meeting was the presentation of Certificates of Appreciation to former chairmen and leaders of the council in recognition of their contributions to its growth.

Those honoured included the immediate past chairman, Amb. Chidiebere Kanu, Com. Jerry Onyemachi and other former leaders.

Responding after receiving his certificate, Amb. Kanu thanked the current leadership for recognising his contributions and assured them of his continued support whenever his experience and services were required.

Also speaking, the Director of Youth Empowerment, Mr. Chikwezie Chigbo, commended Sylvanus for his resilience and commitment to the revival of the council, expressing optimism that the organisation would continue to make progress.

Similarly, Mrs. Isoma Ogbenna applauded the leadership for steering the council through its challenging period and expressed delight over its renewed progress.

The meeting ended with a renewed commitment by the leadership and stakeholders to strengthen the operations of the NYCN, promote responsible representation and advance youth development initiatives across Abia State.



Chairman NYCN Abia State, Comrade Smith Sylvanus

Abia Explains Second Teacher Recruitment Process

Stories by Lovina Onwuka

Abia State Government has explained the criteria used in recruiting the second batch of teachers for public schools, saying the exercise was guided strictly by the manpower needs of schools and conducted with transparency.

Speaking during a press briefing in Umuahia yesterday, the Commissioner for Basic and Secondary Education, Elder Goodluck Chinedu Ubochi, said Governor Alex Otti had earlier approved the recruitment of 5,000 teachers, with 5,394 eventually engaged.

He said a further assessment of schools revealed additional manpower gaps, leading the Governor to approve the recruitment of another 4,000 teachers.

Unlike the first exercise, which focused mainly on applicants with education qualifications such as B.Ed and NCE, the second recruitment was opened to graduates and other qualified applicants to address shortages in technical and vocational subjects.

According to him, about 36,000 applicants applied, while about 21,000 qualified for oral interviews after a 60 per cent benchmark was adopted for the written assessment.

He explained that the benchmark was deliberately kept low to ensure inclusiveness and avoid excluding candidates who might be needed in specialised subject areas.

The final selection, he said, was based on the specific needs submitted by principals and heads of schools across the State.

"We had to match the number of qualified candidates with the actual number of teachers required in each subject and school level," he said.

He explained that this resulted in varying cut-off marks across subjects.

For instance, while about 360 candidates qualified in Biology, only 260 teachers were required. Candidates were therefore ranked according to their scores until the available vacancies were filled.

This, he said, explains why a candidate with a higher score could be unsuccessful while another with a lower score was selected in a different subject area with greater manpower needs.

He noted that in some technical subjects where fewer applicants were available than the number required, all qualified candidates were selected.

Similarly, more than 400 applicants qualified in Marketing, but only 11 teachers were needed because that subject is not widely offered in public schools.

The Commissioner stressed that the recruitment was free from political interference, insisting that neither the Governor nor any government official had a list of preferred candidates.

He said candidates who met the required standards and fulfilled the needs of the schools were

selected.

About 5,785 applicants qualified based on the general benchmark, but those not immediately engaged would be retained in a recruitment pool to fill future vacancies.

He said the State would draw from the pool as needs arise rather than conduct another large-scale recruitment exercise in the immediate future.

The newly recruited teachers are expected to begin orientation in early September before deployment for the new academic session.

The State Government, he added, is also working with the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria to provide professional training for teachers, particularly those without formal education qualifications.

The teachers will have up to two years to acquire the necessary professional teaching skills.

The Commissioner further disclosed that a revised curriculum, adapted from the national curriculum to reflect local needs, would take effect from September.

He said successful candidates were already being directed to the Secondary Education Management Board and other relevant education agencies for onboarding ahead of deployment.

On posting, he said teachers would be deployed strictly to areas where their services were required, while the government works with communities to address accommodation challenges for those posted outside their immediate locations.

He assured the public that the exercise was designed to fill critical gaps in the education sector and ensure that qualified teachers were deployed where they are most needed.

PUBLIC NOTICE: CAVEAT EMPTOR!

DISCLAIMER OF UNAUTHORIZED SALE AND TRESPASS

TAKE NOTICE that all that piece or parcel of land situated at Uzofoyi, Okpara, Okepa, Agarivoro and Oduba, measuring approximately 700sqm, 1000sqm, 700sqm and 1000sqm respectively and a family house with building and appurtenances sitting on 2000sqm land situate at Itaja Ubochia Okoro in Umuahia South LGA of Abia State belong absolutely to:

- 1) Mrs. Chidinma Ogbonna Ekeledo (Nee Ejikeme)
- 2) Mrs. Chinasa Edith Ogidi (Nee Ejikeme)
- 3) Mrs. Oluchi Lois Azubike (Nee Ejikeme)
- 4) Barr. Edna Chinyere Ejikeme, and
- 5) Mrs. Okwuchi Juliet Collins (Nee Ejikeme)

all of the Estate of Late Ejikeme Osoagbakwu of Itaja Ubochia Okoro in Umuahia South LGA of Abia State.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the attention of the above Legal beneficial Owners has been drawn to the activities of certain land grabbers, trespassers, and fraudsters who are conspiring to sell, transact, lease, let or subdivide the said parcels of land including the family house of Late Ejikeme Osoagbakwu without the consent, authority, or knowledge of the true owners.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE HEREBY WARNED that nobody has been briefed, assigned, or given any Power of Attorney to sell, transact, or deal in any manner with the aforementioned property. Any documents, receipts, or agreements executed by anyone other than Mrs. Chidinma Ogbonna Ekeledo (Nee Ejikeme), Mrs. Chinasa Edith Ogidi (Nee Ejikeme), Mrs. Oluchi Lois Azubike (Nee Ejikeme), Barr. Edna Chinyere Ejikeme and Mrs. Okwuchi Juliet Collins (Nee Ejikeme) are forged, fraudulent, and illegal.

ANYONE who negotiates, pays money to, or transacts with these fraudsters does so at his/her OWN SOLE RISK. The true owners will not accept liability for any financial loss, and strict criminal and civil actions will be taken against any trespasser or illegal buyer.

DATED this 26th day of August, 2026.

SIGNED:

Innocent C Mpmagoh Esq

NOTARY PUBLIC & Chartered Arbitrators

1 C Mpmagoh & Co

House Chambers

No 37 Mbonu Street

D/Line, Port Harcourt 0803389595

News

ASEPA To Take Aba Landlord To Court Over 100 Bags Of Sewage

By Okechukwu Ubanji

The Abia State Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA), has said it will take the landlord of a house in Aba to court after about 100 bags of sewage were found in the building.

The sewage was discovered at 16 Ibadan Street, Aba, during an inspection by ASEPA officials on August 14, 2026.

The Deputy General Manager of ASEPA in Aba, Okezie Ezengwa, disclosed this in a statement. He said the discovery was disturbing because the building was being used as a home.

Ezengwa said the landlord and tenants were asked to report to the agency and explain what happened. However, he said they went into hiding after they were invited.

He said ASEPA was making efforts to find them and bring them before the court.

According to him, anyone found responsible for keeping or disposing of the sewage in the area would face legal action.

The ASEPA boss also said the building had been closed down based on a court order.

Ezengwa said four nursing mothers were living in the building when ASEPA officials arrived. Their babies were between two weeks and four months old.

He expressed concern about the health risk the situation could create for the mothers, their babies and other people living around

the area.

Ezengwa explained that keeping human waste in such a manner could cause serious health problems and make the environment unsafe, especially in a residential area.

The ASEPA official also spoke about the difficulties faced by the agency's officers while enforcing environmental laws in Aba.

He said some monitoring officers had been threatened and attacked by people who were found breaking environmental laws. Some of the officers, he added, had suffered serious injuries.

Ezengwa praised the ASEPA officials who discovered the sewage for doing their job despite the threats and attacks.

He said the agency would continue to inspect Aba and other parts of Abia State to make sure that landlords, tenants, business owners and other residents follow environmental rules. He warned residents against dumping human waste or carrying out activities that could pollute the environment and put people's health at risk.

Ezengwa also appealed to residents to report activities that could cause environmental pollution to ASEPA.

He assured the people of Aba that the agency would continue its efforts to keep the state clean, safe and healthy.



Okezie Ezengwa.



Gov. Eno

Eno's Housing Investment To Tackle Rising Accommodation Cost In Akwa Ibom - Ndueso

From Lorina Emole, Uyo

The Senior Special Assistant on Research and Documentation to Governor Umo Eno of Akwa Ibom State, Dr. Essien Ndueso, said the reason why the governor was investing in various housing projects was to cushion the effects of the rising cost of accommodation in the state.

In an interview at a television programme, monitored by our correspondent in Uyo, recently, Ndueso said, Eno's administration had embarked on several housing interventions, including the Compassionate Homes, accommodation for Local Government Area chairmen, the 250-unit ARISE Housing Estate at Mbierbe Akpaw, Bleskpo Asutan, the 250 units at Aviation Village, the 100 units of the medical village, the 64-unit housing estate for Executive and House of Assembly Members and Ewet Luxury Garden at Uruan Street, among others.

According to him, Compassionate Homes had provided shelter for hundreds of vulnerable families who previously lacked decent accommodation.

He added that the government had also provided 150 housing units to civil servants at the Grace Estate, with about 86 additional units still available for allocation.

"Through the

Compassionate Homes

that the governor is building, over 461 homes have been rebuilt and given free of charge to those who never had a roof, or a good roof, over their heads," he said.

Dr. Ndueso further disclosed that the government is currently constructing 250 housing units outside the state capital under the ARISE Housing Scheme at Bleskpo Asutan, with the first phase of 100 units scheduled for completion by December.

According to him, another housing estate was also being developed along the medical corridor, with 100 housing units planned to provide accommodation for medical personnel and ensure that housing does not constitute a challenge to their effective service delivery.

He also cited the ARISE Palm Resort, which he said has 20 housing units comprising five three-bedroom flats and 15 two-bedroom flats, as another intervention designed to provide accommodation and support economic activities.

"The Arise Palm Resort, for example, has another 20 units of housing, three-bedroom flats, and then 15 two-bedroom flats," he said.

The governor's aide explained that the rising demand for accommodation in Uyo was one of the factors influencing rental costs, noting that government could not directly dictate

prices to private landlords.

He, however, said the government was addressing the challenge by expanding the state capital and opening up previously underdeveloped areas for residential development.

"Yes, government will not go to landlords and state telling them what to do. You see, it is just the case of someone opening up his business and saying this is how much the cost of his own commodity is."

"If that is too

expensive, then of course the other person that is selling cheaper will get more consumers," he further stated.

Dr. Ndueso maintained that increasing the availability of housing options and opening up new areas for development would help reduce pressure on accommodation in Uyo and ultimately bring down rental costs.

He said the development of neighbouring local government areas would also contribute to decongesting Uyo by creating alternative locations for residential and economic activities.

"Look at the volume of roads opening up the rural areas, well over 1,300kms, with model schools and health centers across the 31 local government areas and they come with residential apartments for teachers and health workers."

"The government is doing its best in ensuring

that there is no monopoly in terms of what you should have as access to basic housing," he disclosed.

Beyond housing, Ndueso said the state government was implementing broader economic development initiatives aimed at diversifying the state's economy from crude oil into other sectors, particularly tourism and agriculture," he stated.

"There are quite a good number of investments that the government is doing to diversify from crude oil to tourism and agriculture."

On the safety of all the investments of government, he further noted that the government has also put structures in place to ensure effective management of its investments and properties, including the Asset Management Committee which takes stocks and ensures the efficient management of the assets of the Government.

According to him, the measures are aimed at ensuring that government assets are properly managed, maintained and deployed for the benefit of Akwa Ibom people.

Ndueso reiterated that expanding Uyo, developing neighbouring local government areas and increasing housing supply remained critical to addressing the pressure on accommodation and cushioning the impact of rising housing costs in the state capital.



Congratulations

ON THE

35TH ANNIVERSARY OF

ABIA STATE

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF

UNITY, PROGRESS & EXCELLENCE

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD,
MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF
ABIA STATE HOMELAND SECURITY AGENCY,
I HEARTILY CONGRATULATE

HIS EXCELLENCY

DR. ALEX CHIOMA OTTI, OFR

EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE

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35TH ANNIVERSARY OF ABIA STATE**

- THIS MILESTONE OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON OUR JOURNEY, CELEBRATE OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND RENEW OUR COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT TO PEACE, SECURITY, UNITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.
- WE COMMEND YOUR EXCELLENCY FOR YOUR VISIONARY LEADERSHIP, GOOD GOVERNANCE, INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC GROWTH, IMPROVED SECURITY AND THE WELFARE OF ABIANS.
- AS WE CELEBRATE, WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING EFFORTS TOWARD A SAFER, MORE PROSPEROUS AND UNITED ABIA STATE.
- MAY OUR DEAR STATE CONTINUE TO THRIVE AND ATTAIN GREATER HEIGHTS.



Signed:

Col. C. K. Ukoha (Rtd)

GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

Abia State Homeland Security Agency

**HAPPY 35TH ANNIVERSARY,
ABIA STATE!**

GOD BLESS ABIA STATE!



Photo Speaks



Inside and outside views of the newly commissioned, remodelled and digitally equipped 80-bed Obingwa General Hospital, built by the Abia State Government under Governor Dr. Alex Otti. The hospital has been renamed in honour of the late Chima Ubani, an illustrious son of Obingwa LGA and renowned human rights activist.

News

Mrs. Otti Calls For Greater Economic Opportunities For Akwete Women

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

The wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, has called for greater economic opportunities for women in Ukwu East Local Government Area, particularly those engaged in the production and promotion of the renowned Akwete cloth.

Mrs. Otti made the call during the 2026 August Meeting of women in Ukwu East, where she described Akwete as an important symbol of Abia's cultural identity and a valuable economic asset that should bring greater prosperity to its custodians.

Represented by the Commissioner for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Mrs. Ngozi Felix, Mrs. Otti, said the women of Ukwu East had played a critical role in preserving Akwete weaving for generations, stressing that their contribution to the state's cultural heritage must be matched with deliberate efforts to improve their economic wellbeing.

According to her, the recent visit of the wife of the President, Senator Churem Tinubu, to Akwete emphasised the national importance of the traditional craft and the need to give serious attention to the women whose skills have kept the industry alive.

Mrs. Otti said the visit was not merely ceremonial but provided an opportunity to celebrate and encourage Akwete women while drawing attention to the economic potential of the industry.

She disclosed that the administration of Governor Alex Otti had, since 2023, been working towards reviving and modernising the Akwete industry, insisting that cultural heritage should also serve as a source of sustainable livelihood.

"We want to ensure that the women whose hands sustain this heritage must share in the prosperity it brings. Because when Akwete women earn more, homes grow stronger, children have more opportunities and Ukwu East prospers," she said.

Mrs. Otti said the administration's women empowerment agenda was anchored on the theme, **'Women of Abia: Empowered to Thrive'**, adding that the goal was to move women from temporary assistance to sustainable economic opportunities.

She said her office,

through the Safe Tent Care Initiative, had continued to support women with skills acquisition, start-up assistance and other opportunities designed to help them build sustainable livelihoods.

The governor's wife also highlighted government support for rural farmers through fertilizer distribution and assistance to market women under the Abia State Economic Empowerment Programme.

That is the Abia we are building," she said.

She also urged the women to remain actively involved in the political development of the state and encouraged eligible voters to participate in future elections.

Also speaking, the wife of the Mayor of Ukwu East Local Government Area, Mrs. Favour Chibunna Akara, commended the Otti administration for creating opportunities for women across the state.

She said women in Abia were increasingly making significant contributions to



Mrs. Priscilla Otti,

governance, education, healthcare, agriculture, entrepreneurship and public service. Akara described women as the backbone of the economy and society, noting that women in Ukwu East were contributing to food security through farming, sustaining local markets through trading and

serving their communities as educators, healthcare workers, entrepreneurs, artisans and public servants. She stressed that empowerment came with responsibility, urging women to instill honesty, hard work and respect in their children and encourage girls to pursue education,

innovation and leadership.

Akara urged the women to make the August Meeting more than an annual tradition by using it as an opportunity to renew their commitment to stronger families, women's empowerment and the development of Ukwu East and Abia State.

The keynote speaker, Mrs. Matilda Anyamele, said the theme of the conference was timely and relevant to the realities confronting women in the state.

Anyamele said empowerment should go beyond providing assistance, stressing that it must involve creating opportunities, building capacity, restoring dignity and enabling women to contribute meaningfully to their families and communities.

She celebrated the resilience, industry and achievements of Abia women but noted that many still faced challenges including poverty, limited access to finance, inadequate educational opportunities, unemployment, gender-

based violence and social exclusion.

"Empowerment is therefore not a luxury; it is a necessity. An empowered woman is confident, productive, self-reliant and capable of making informed decisions," she said.

Anyamele commended Mrs. Priscilla Otti for her commitment to the welfare and advancement of women, children and vulnerable groups across Abia State.

Meanwhile, the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Women Affairs, Mrs. Chinenye Nwaka, commended the women of Ukwu East for turning out in large numbers to participate in the August Meeting.

Nwaka urged the women to take advantage of the empowerment opportunities provided by the state government, describing the initiatives as part of efforts to improve their livelihoods and economic independence.

She also encouraged the women to reciprocate the administration's gestures by supporting Governor Alex Otti in his re-election bid in 2027.

ASUBEB Starts Bidding For 2024 - 2025 UBE Projects In Abia

By Ifeanyi Chukwu Faith

The Abia State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB) has started the open bidding process for the 2024 and 2025 Universal Basic Education (UBE) Intervention Projects across the state.

The exercise is aimed at making sure the process is fair, transparent and properly managed, while ensuring that Abia children get better classrooms, learning materials and other educational facilities.

Speaking during the opening of the bids, the Executive Chairman of ASUBEB, Amb. Edzie Lydia Onuoha, said the exercise was an important step towards improving basic education and providing children with safe and better places to learn.

She explained that the UBE Intervention Grant is meant to help states meet important needs in basic education. She said the projects would include building and renovating classrooms, providing desks and other school furniture, textbooks, teaching materials, ICT equipment and other facilities needed to improve learning.

Amb. Onuoha said the projects are part of the education development plans of the Abia State

Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, which focus on better school facilities, improved teaching, the use of technology, accountability and better learning results.

She praised Governor Otti for his support for education, especially for providing the state's required counterpart funding. She said this has helped Abia access and use the UBE funds for important projects in schools.

The ASUBEB Chief also thanked the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) for its continued support and partnership with Abia State in developing basic education.

According to her, the projects will cover all 17 Local Government Areas of Abia State. They will include the construction and renovation of classrooms, provision of desks and other furniture, textbooks, teaching materials, ICT facilities and other school infrastructure.

The ASUBEB chairman described the projects as an investment in the future of Abia children, teachers and communities. She assured the people that the Board would ensure that the projects meet the required standards.

on time and according to the approved standards. We will not lower our standards because every classroom, desk and learning material provided is an investment in the future of our children," she said.

She also assured contractors that the bidding process would follow the relevant government procurement laws and regulations. She said contractors would be assessed based on their ability, experience, capacity, honesty and ability to provide value for money.

Amb. Onuoha urged contractors to be professional and responsible throughout the bidding and construction process. She said ASUBEB would continue to promote openness, accountability and quality work in its efforts to build a better basic education system in Abia.

Earlier, the Executive Secretary of UBEC, Dr. Aisha Garba, represented by the UBE Co-ordinator, Lady Urvyne Unuofor, praised Governor Alex Otti for his efforts to improve education in the state.

She reminded contractors and other participants that the bidding process must follow the approved rules and procedures. She urged

successful contractors to obey all the terms and conditions of their contracts.

Lady Unuofor called on contractors to do their work honestly, professionally and responsibly, noting that the main beneficiaries of the projects are children and future generations.

She also warned contractors against using poor-quality materials or carrying out sub-standard work. She said every child in Abia deserves a good education and a safe environment for learning.

The representative of the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), Umahia Branch, Eng. Prof. Nelson Onuaka, thanked ASUBEB for inviting the Society to take part in the bid-opening exercise.

He said the involvement of professional bodies showed that ASUBEB was committed to an open process and to ensuring that the projects meet the required technical standards.

Prof. Onuaka urged contractors handling construction and engineering projects to work with relevant professional and regulatory bodies and ensure that all projects are carried out according to approved standards and specifications.

In his vote of thanks,

Chuks Uduma praised ASUBEB for conducting the bidding process openly and fairly.

He commended the executive chairman and members of the board for following due process and said contractors were ready to work with the government to deliver quality projects that would benefit communities across the state.

One of the major highlights of the event was the official opening of the bid box by Chief Mrs. J. O. Kalu. She marked the beginning of the public opening and review of bids submitted by contractors interested in carrying out the projects.

The event was attended by the Full-Time Board Member I, Dr. Onyechukwu Onyegulu; Board Member II, Deaconess Nwachukwu Nwogwo; Board Member III, Hon. Harrison Okeke; and representatives of the ICPC, Civil Society Organisations, Nigerian Society of Engineers, contractors and other stakeholders.

The exercise further showed ASUBEB's commitment to ensuring that funds meant for basic education are properly used to provide better schools, learning facilities and improved educational opportunities for children across Abia State.

News

**Eno Cautions
Abia Leaders
Against Divisive
Statements**

From Lovina Emole, Uyo

Governor Ueno Eno of Abia State, has cautioned political leaders, traditional and community stakeholders, as well as other opinion leaders in the state to be cautious of making inflammatory and divisive statements that could sow discord among the people.

The governor, who gave the warning at the Victor Attah International Airport, Uyo, after arriving from Montreal, Quebec, Canada, where he had gone for the pre-delivery inspection of the latest aircraft acquired by Abia Air, noted that division if allowed to thrive could undermine the collective progress of the state.

Dismissing claims of disunity in the state by some stakeholders, the governor maintained that his administration has not allowed ethnic origin to determine how individuals were treated saying, such narrative was only aimed to distract his government and portray Abia as a divided state.

Eno stated that his administration promotes inclusion as witnessed in his cabinet, stressing that key government officials, including the Deputy Governor and Chief Delivery Advisor, come from different senatorial districts and parts of the state.

"I don't think I have ever defined anybody by where they come from. So, I ask Akwa Ibomites to ignore all of those things. There is nothing like division anywhere. People just want to distract government."

He, therefore, called on the people to disregard claims capable of stirring ethnic or political sentiments, urging them to remain united and committed to the collective advancement of the state.

On his trip to Canada for the pre-delivery inspection of Abia Air's latest Airbus A220-300, Governor Eno said the latest acquisition brings the number of aircraft procured by the administration to five adding that work was also going on at an aviation village designed to provide accommodation for airline personnel, while the Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility was approaching completion.

He said the full operation of these facilities would expand the economic benefits of the aviation sector beyond air transportation, particularly through employment opportunities and increased economic activity.

Abia LP, Labour Unions Strengthen Relationship Ahead of 2027

By Faith Ifeanyi Chukwu

The Abia State Chapter of the Labour Party has continued its discussions with organised labour as its State Working Committee (SWC) met with leaders of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC) and other labour unions ahead of the 2027 general elections.

More than 100 labour leaders and representatives attended the meeting, which was a follow-up to the earlier meeting held on July 22, 2026. At the earlier meeting, both the party and labour leaders agreed to hold more consultations.

The Labour Party said organised labour played an

important role in the creation and growth of the party. The party leadership stressed that labour unions should remain actively involved and contribute to the development of the party.

The meeting also focused on how to improve the relationship between the Labour Party and organised labour. Both sides agreed to continue meeting and discussing issues that would promote unity, understanding and cooperation ahead of the 2027 elections.

The State Chairman of the Labour Party, Hon. Peter Anubaku, thanked the labour leaders for attending the meeting and for their support. He said the party would continue to operate an open

and inclusive system where important stakeholders would be carried along.

The labour leaders also praised the administration of Governor Alex Chibuma Otti, OFR, for what they described as improvements in the state, especially in areas affecting workers and the general welfare of residents.

They also discussed some principles of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on workers' welfare and social protection. According to them, some of the policies of the Abia State Government are in line with these principles.

The unions also presented some demands and issues they wanted the government and party to consider. The Labour Party received the concerns positively, while both sides

agreed to continue discussions on them.

The labour leaders further commended Governor Otti for what they described as his concern for workers and his approach to governance. They said some government policies were helping to improve the lives of workers and other residents of the state.

In his remarks, the Labour Party chairman compared the situation in Abia before Governor Otti came into office with developments under the present administration. He mentioned the regular payment of salaries, improvements in public transportation, road construction and rehabilitation, education and other areas.

The union leaders expressed their support for Governor Otti and said they were ready to continue working for the development of Abia State and the success of the Labour Party.

The meeting was attended by the NLC Chairman in Abia State, Comrade O. Koro Oghonmwa, and the NLC Secretary, Comrade Chukwuma Nze.

Also present were the TUC Chairman, Abia State, Comrade Dr. Ifeanyi Ezech, and the TUC Secretary, Comrade Okoye Ifeasuchi, as well as leaders and representatives of other labour unions.



Cross-section of Labour Party members, NLC and TUC leaders during a meeting to discuss and strengthen their relationship ahead of the 2027 elections.

Good Roads, Critical To Women Economic Development - Mrs. Otti

By Chibumma Ikeokwu

The wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti, has identified good infrastructure, particularly quality roads, as a critical factor in creating an enabling environment for women to thrive economically.

Mrs. Otti stated this while addressing women at the 2026 August Meeting in Abia South where she described women as central to the economic transformation taking place across Abia State.

Represented by the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Dr. Maureen Agbakuwa, she noted that women were creating value across various sectors, including leather and fashion, trade, agriculture, entrepreneurship and manufacturing, but stressed that their efforts would yield greater results when

supported by the right infrastructure and economic environment.

According to her, the theme of this year's August Meeting, "Women of Abia, Empowered to Thrive," reflects the aspirations of women across the state. "Empowerment is not only about giving a woman support. It is about creating the conditions in which her effort can yield results," she said.

Mrs. Otti said the ongoing reconstruction of major roads across the state formed part of the government's broader economic empowerment strategy, noting that poor road infrastructure had, over the years, undermined businesses and increased transportation costs.

She recalled that Port Harcourt Road in Abia had for decades become a symbol of neglect, with its deplorable condition affecting businesses,

transport operators, schools, churches and factories. The governor's wife said the reconstruction of Port Harcourt Road, Obankoku Road, Crystal Park Road and other roads by the administration of Governor Alex Otti had begun to change the narrative, describing the projects as a restoration of dignity, commerce and comfort.

"For our women, this matters very much. Good roads cut costs, speed up business and give our women the chance to thrive," she said.

She also highlighted interventions by her office through the Safe Tenure Initiative, particularly the Abia Women Economic Empowerment Programme, which she said provides grants and other forms of support to women operating small businesses.

Mrs. Otti urged women to take advantage of available opportunities,

remain resilient and continue contributing to the economic growth of their families and communities. Also speaking, the wife of the Abia South Local Government Mayor, Mrs. Akudo Precious Anyanwu, said empowering women with the right skills, knowledge and opportunities was essential to building stronger families and communities.

She described Abia women as women of strength, enterprise and impact, noting that they were making contributions as traders, entrepreneurs, caregivers, business and community leaders. "A thriving woman is not merely surviving; she is leading, providing and empowering her family, her business and her community," she said.

Mrs. Anyanwu stressed the importance of skills acquisition and knowledge in areas such as business,

technology, agriculture and financial management, saying they would enable women to become more productive, independent and economically empowered.

She commended Governor Alex Otti and wife for supporting women adding that when women thrive, families and communities also prosper, ultimately contributing to the development of the state. Meanwhile, the Mayor of Abia South Local Government Area, Mrs. Anyanwu Dennis, commended Governor Otti for creating opportunities aimed at improving the welfare and economic prospects of women in the state.

He called on women to support the governor's administrative, saying sustained support was necessary for the continuation of the development initiatives of the government.

News

Oyedepo Reacts To Sheikh Jingiri's Comment On Nigeria Being A Muslim Country

By Okechukwu Ubani

Bishop David Oyedepo, founder and President of Living Faith Church Worldwide, popularly known as Winners' Chapel, has reacted strongly to a recent comment by Islamic cleric, Sheikh San'Allah Jingiri, that Nigeria is a Muslim country.

Sheikh Jingiri reportedly made the comment at a political event in Kano State while explaining his support for the All Progressives Congress (APC) Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket ahead of the January election.

The cleric also reportedly said that Muslims are more in number than Christians in Nigeria. The statement sparked reactions across country, with many Nigerians, including some Muslims, expressing concern over what they described as a divisive comment.

Speaking during a sermon at the recently concluded Youth Alive Convention 2026, Oyedepo challenged the claim that Nigeria is a Muslim country.

He asked those who hold such a view to look at the large number of Christians worshipping in churches across the country.

Oyedepo mentioned major Christian ministries, including Redemption Camp, Salvation Ministries and Danam International Gospel Centre, as examples of places where large numbers of Christians gather for worship.

"Watch Redemption Camp, Salvation Ministries, Danam and other ministries in Nigeria. And someone will stand and say Nigeria is an Islamic nation? Is he mad? Yes, he must be mad," Oyedepo said.

The bishop's comment has added to the ongoing debate over religion and national identity in Nigeria. Many Nigerians believe that the country belongs to everyone, regardless of their religion, ethnicity or background.

Oyedepo also spoke about the future of Nigeria, saying there would be what he described as "strange happenings" in the country within the next 12 months.

"Now, watch, there shall be strange happenings between now and the next twelve months in Nigeria," he added.

His comments have continued to attract attention, with many Nigerians calling on religious and political leaders to be careful with their statements and avoid words that could create religious tension or divide the country.



Wife of the Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Oti, sixth from the left, with other distinguished guests at the 41st National Conference of the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), held recently in Umuahia, Abia State

Senator Tinubu, Mrs. Oti, Charge Muslim Women to Build Peaceful Families, Stronger Communities

By Chibinwa Ikeokwu

The First Lady of Nigeria, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, has charged Muslim women across the country, to continue promoting peaceful families, stronger communities and a better Nigeria.

Senator Tinubu gave the charge at the 41st National Conference of the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), held in Umuahia, Abia State.

Represented by the wife of the Vice-President, Hajia Nana Shettima, the First Lady urged the women to lead by example through love, compassion and mutual support.

She also encouraged them to instill sound moral and religious values in their children, stressing that children remained the future of society.

According to her, the conference provided an opportunity for participants to exchange ideas, learn from one another and strengthen the bonds of unity among Muslim women across the country.

Also speaking at the conference, the wife of the Abia

State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Oti, emphasized her consistency with the inclusion and empowerment of Muslim women in the state.

Mrs. Oti said religion should never constitute a barrier to opportunities, development and participation in public programmes.

She described Muslim women as an important part of the Abia family, stressing that her support for them had never been conditional on religious affiliation.

The Abia First Lady said she was consistently sought to involve Muslim women in key government and empowerment initiatives because "no woman should be left behind simply because of faith."

Mrs. Oti said the State Women's Leader, Hajia Azzafina, could testify to her commitment to inclusiveness and support for Muslim women.

The governor's wife stressed that such gestures went beyond ceremony, noting that they reflected her belief that public service should be centred on people rather than slogans.

"Service is about people first, not slogans," she said, reaffirming her commitment to building an inclusive society where women of all faiths could participate fully in development and empowerment programmes.

In her remarks, the 41st National Amrah of FOMWAN, Dr. Sumaye Fadimatu Hamza, expressed gratitude to Almighty Allah and welcomed members of the Board of Trustees, led by Her Excellency, Hajia Lateefat Modupe Okunnu, delegates, distinguished guests, Islamic scholars, development partners, government representatives and members of the association to the conference.

Dr. Hamza commended the Abia State Government, under the leadership of Governor Alex Oti, for its hospitality and support in hosting the conference.

She also praised the national and local organising committees for their efforts in ensuring the success of the event.

Speaking on the theme of the conference, "Faith, Resilience and Responsibility: Muslim

Women Responding to Challenges", Dr. Hamza said the theme was timely and reflected the responsibilities of Muslim women in confronting contemporary challenges.

She noted that faith was not merely a personal conviction but a force capable of shaping actions, strengthening relationships and inspiring responsible responses to issues affecting families, communities and the nation.

According to her, every challenge presents an opportunity for renewal, service and positive transformation.

Dr. Hamza said FOMWAN had, for more than four decades, remained a beacon of hope through its contributions to education, healthcare, women's empowerment, humanitarian intervention, peacebuilding and community development.

She acknowledged the contributions of generations of Muslim women who, she said, had dedicated themselves to serving Allah through service to humanity.

"Nation-building is a shared responsibility, and faith serves as our moral compass in times of uncertainty," she said.

She urged Muslim women to remain committed to the values of justice, moderation and service to humanity, particularly in an era characterised by misinformation, ethical dilemmas and growing societal tensions.

Dr. Hamza added that Islamic faith provided guidance not only in worship but also in leadership, citizenship and community development.

The conference brought together Muslim women from across Nigeria to deliberate on contemporary challenges, strengthen their networks and explore ways of contributing to national development.

Obuohia Obi-Ibere Women Hold August Meeting, Unveil Project

By Okereke Kate

The Women's Wing of the Obuohia Obi-Ibere Development Union, has celebrated its 32nd Annual August Meeting with the unveiling of a renovated Women's Hall in Obuohia Obi-Ibere, Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State.

The project was executed by the women as part of activities marking the 2026 August Conference and is aimed at providing a functional space for women's activities, including skills acquisition and community development initiatives.

The event, held at the community school field in Obuohia Obi-Ibere, attracted dignitaries including the immediate past member representing Ikwuano/Umuahia Federal Constituency, Hon. Sam Onuigbo, clergy, community leaders, women from within and outside the community,

and other stakeholders.

Speaking at the occasion, the outgoing National President of the Women's Wing, Dame Princess Onuigbo, said her administration assumed office with a clear vision to rebuild, empower and elevate the community.

She said the achievements recorded during her tenure were made possible through the collective support and contributions of members, as well as the collaboration of illustrious sons and daughters of Obuohia Obi-Ibere in the diaspora.

According to her, the achievements of the women include the renovation of the Women's hall, provision of a benchtop support for market rehabilitation and functionalization of the community health centre, rural electrification projects involving transformers and solar panels, road grading, erosion control initiatives and

the installation of agro-processing equipment.

Onuigbo also commended Governor Oti for his administration's interventions in the state, particularly in the area of infrastructure and healthcare.

She disclosed that the women had also contributed to youth and educational development through provision of instructional materials for students.

The outgoing president further highlighted the successful registration of the women at government and state levels, describing the development as a milestone that had strengthened the organisation's voice and operations.

Other areas she identified as achievements included peace and conflict resolution, establishment of security task

forces and vigilante groups, growth of the union's financial reserves and an increase in its membership.

While expressing appreciation to members for their sacrifices, Onuigbo stressed that community development should transcend political affiliations.

In his goodwill message, the former lawmaker who represented Onuigbo for Ikwuano/Umuahia Federal Constituency, Hon. Sam Onuigbo, commended the women for sustaining the annual August meeting and for using it as a platform for community development.

Onuigbo also praised the First Princess Onuigbo for her leadership and contributions to the development of the community over the past decade.

He commended Governor Oti for what he described as the infrastructural transformation taking place

across Abia State.

Also speaking, the National President of Obuohia Obi-Ibere Development Union, Mrs. W. S. N. S. Chinadiri Amama, represented by the National Vice-President, Mr. Ikechi Sigmund Mpanah, congratulated the women on the successful celebration.

In a goodwill message delivered on his behalf by the Mayor of Ikwuano Local Government Area, Dr. Anthony Nwabun, Abia State Governor, Dr. Oti, congratulated the women for their contributions to community development.

The Governor described the August Meeting as a platform through which women had consistently contributed to the development of their communities.

He said the women of Obuohia Obi-Ibere had demonstrated that annual

Opinion

The Dire Need To Have An Updated "Information Guide" For Abia State

Abia State was created via a Military Edict, on 27th August 1991, by the Government of General Ibrahim B. Babangida. It was carved out from the old Imo State. Within August 2026, she would be celebrating her thirty-five (35) Years Anniversary.

During the regime of the then Executive Governor of Abia State, His Excellency, Dr. Oji Uzor Kalu, MON, the Information Department, Ministry of Information, Culture, Sports and Tourism, was courteous enough to publish and print the erivable "Information Guide", that succinctly posited our Culture, Tourism and Investment potentials etc. in Abia State.

To be very candid, that pamphlet informed, all and sundry, the origin of the acronym "ABIA", its Geographical features and Minerals deposits, in the approved seventeen Local Governments Areas. The major sprawling towns in these Local Government Areas were carefully indicated, with their corresponding unique cultural features, at a glance, in the three approved political zones. For, vital information, enhances rapid Economic development in an area.

Without controversy, Igbos are noted for their travelling ventures, cultural dances, preservation of their antiquities and most recently, the erection of cozy International lodging accommodations, with their corresponding cuisine dishes.

In the past three to four years, Abia State, has been lifted to greater heights in virtually all ramifications. These have enhanced more and more, tourists centers in the State,

to the chagrin of other adjoining States. To crown it all, the state is among the first five States that abhor hoodlums, miscreants, kidnappers etc.

It is therefore, very essential, to update and inundate the happenings in our New Abia. In doing these, we can humbly locate the once deadly historical Omenkio Bridge at Ozu Abam, the on-going construction of the International Airport at Nsulu in Isiala Ngwa North, the Nnema Oil Bus Terminus Building Umuahia, which you can equate with Hamburg Airport Building, Germany, including the forty (40) Electric Buses

expected to run through the length and breadth of Abia State. Yes, modernizing the Abia State University, Umuahia, the classical Abia State Secretariat after demolishing the old dilapidated mushroom Secretariats, the anticipated Sea Port at Obingwa, the enhancement of the Three Arms of the Military in Orla, Owerri and Umuahia. Last I forgot, our widely advertised Aagwad Women Meetings, tailored towards developing our communities in all facets.

From all antecedents, the first thing God made in His creative act, was Light. Hence, the well pronounced desire to improve on

our persistent electrical blackouts has come with the construction and installation of an entirely brand new rural electricity projects, courtesy of Ingr. Barh Nnaji. When once there is consistent electricity light, rapid economic development becomes the order of the day in the land.

We should, at this stage, recall the total transformation of State Hospitals, starting from Ukwu to Abia, Umuahia to Isikwuato to Arochuku. Is it the Primary schools, where our children are taught how to develop their skills, in the Smart Schools. This is because, His Excellency, Dr. Alex Chima Oti, had since realized, like most pundits that the following professions would be very irrelevant in the near future, due to AI factors. These are Library Science, International Relations, Anthropology, Sociology, Linguistics, Public Administration, Religious Study, Philosophy and Political Science.

It is now very apparent and vital that the over 30yr old "Information Guide" should be updated for, many of the old prestigious hotels, industries, dilapidated roads in the Pamphlet are no more. New, more modern prestigious ones have risen in New Abia.

Information, is Power, is a time tested English adage. And the Holy Scripture succinctly posited in 1 Corinthians 14:40, "Let all things be done decently and in order". It is not, therefore, surprising, because over seven FM Radio Stations have clustered within the State Capital, Umuahia.

Elder Okay Ugwa JP
08037422028



Gov. Oti.

The major sprawling towns in these Local Government Areas were carefully indicated, with their corresponding unique cultural features, at a glance, in the three approved political zones.

Vox Pop

Abia At 35: Voices Of Abians On 35 Years Of Freedom And Development

By Chinedu Kelechi

As Abia State marks 35 years anniversary of its creation, it offers an opportunity to reflect on the journey of God's Own State, the impact of successive administrations and the expectations of its people.

From the political class to the classroom, markets and streets, Abians have experienced different governments, policies, achievements and challenges. To capture the mood, National Ambassador sampled opinions on the state's journey and the road ahead.

"ABIA'S HISTORY HAS DISTINCT PHASES" - POLITICAL ANALYST

Political analyst, Maazi Nnadozie Chikodibia Uguchukwu, 56, said Abia's history could be divided into distinct phases shaped by political circumstances.

"The early years were largely about establishing the new state and building administrative structures," he said. "The return of democracy in 1999 created a new phase in which citizens

could directly assess their elected leaders."

He said the administrations of Oji Uzor Kalu, Theodore Oji Okezie Ikpeazu left different legacies.

"Kalu's administration was associated with aggressive political mobilisation and visible projects. Theodore Oji consolidated existing structures while pursuing his own programmes. Ikpeazu placed considerable emphasis on Abia, especially roads and industrial development, though critics argued that development did not always match the needs of the state."

On the present administration, he described Governor Dr. Alex Chima Oti, OFR, as a significant shift in approach.

"The emphasis is on infrastructure, public-sector reform, fiscal discipline and efforts to convert Abia's enormous potential into visible development."

He added that the real test of governance was sustainability.

"We must ask whether projects improve productivity, create jobs, strengthen institutions and remain useful after the government that built them has left office."

"HUMAN CAPITAL IS THE FOUNDATION" - SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

For Dr. David Ikpe Oti, Principal of Shikina Model Academy, Abia, development should not be measured only by roads and buildings but by the quality of human capital.

"Governments come and go, but human capital remains. If you educate a child today, you are investing in Abia for the next 30 or 40 years."

He said successive governments had invested in education but warned against constantly changing policies.

"Education cannot be treated as a political project that changes direction every four years."

Dr. Oti commended initiatives such as TechEzise Cohorts, the Leadership Academy programme and other capacity-building interventions.

"Roads can support

commerce, but educated and skilled people create businesses and sustain economic growth," he said.

"WE WANT ROADS, SECURITY AND OPPORTUNITIES" - MARKET WOMAN

For market woman, Mrs Joy Chimezie, governance is judged by its impact on daily life.

"What ordinary people want is simple: good roads, security, electricity, water and an environment where we can sell our goods and make profit."

She acknowledged improvements in road infrastructure but urged greater attention to the cost of doing business and small-scale traders.

"We thank God for bringing Abia this far, but we still have work to do. We want an Abia where our children will not have to leave the state before they can find opportunities."

"WE MEASURE GOVERNMENT FROM THE ROAD" - TRICYCLE OPERATOR

Commercial tricycle operator, Mr Chidi Nnapior, said ordinary workers assess government

through everyday realities.

"We know when the road is bad and when it is good. We know when fuel is expensive and when transport fares are high."

He said good roads reduce vehicle repairs and improve business.

"If the roads are good, it helps everybody. Our vehicles last longer and we can make more money."

He appealed for greater attention to informal-sector workers.

"We are part of the economy. We need security and a system where we can work without unnecessary harassment."

"ABIA'S STORY IS ABOUT ITS PEOPLE" - CLERGYMAN

Pastor Chinedu Mark said Abia's history should not be reduced to a record of governments.

"It is the history of a people, their hopes, disappointments, sacrifices and resilience."

He said every administration should be judged by its impact on the wellbeing of the people.

"Roads, hospitals, schools and markets are important, but the ultimate

purpose of governance is to improve human life."

He urged Abians to appreciate the achievements of previous governments while remaining honest about their shortcomings.

"Citizens should not support government blindly, nor should they oppose everything because of political differences. We must ask what kind of state we are leaving for our children."

THE ROAD AHEAD

The voices sampled tell a common story: Abians are proud of how far their state has come but remain conscious of the work ahead.

Thirty-five years after its creation, the challenge is to transform Abia's human, commercial and entrepreneurial potential into lasting prosperity.

That, perhaps, is the true meaning of Abia at 35 - a state shaped by its past, changing in the present and looking towards a future that depends on purposeful leadership and the collective commitment of its people.



Creative Writers Hangout

Dear Step-mother (11)

A few days later, Uche sat inside the luxurious office of Rangers executives overlooking the training grounds. Rain slid gently across the giant glass windows while legal papers rested neatly across the polished wooden table.

Gracie Sinclair sat nearby alongside club directors and agents.

The new contract offered huge wages, senior squad promotion, bonuses, and long-term development guarantees. Before he signed, "There's something wrong," Uche said.

The room fell silent.

"What is it?" Sinclair asked. Uche spoke quietly, "I want my mother brought to Scotland." He paused briefly, "and Sandra too."

The men exchanged curious glances.

Uche's expression remained calm but determined. "They suffered while I was fighting for this dream," he said softly. "I can't leave them there anymore."

The men wasted no time in accepting Uche's request. Uche signed carefully. His hands trembled slightly. When the final document was completed, one director smiled warmly, "Welcome officially to Rangers Football Club."

Outside the office windows, cold Scottish rain continued falling over the training grounds where everything had begun for him months earlier.

But now - Uche was no longer merely surviving in Scotland. He was building a new life.

The afternoon heat hung heavily over the compound as a beautiful sky-blue jeep rolled slowly into the narrow dusty street. Children playing football barefoot along the roadside immediately stopped to stare. Neighbors peered through half-open windows.

Even nearby traders passed briefly beneath umbrellas and kiosks to watch the expensive vehicle glide carefully past potholes and muddy gutters before stopping in front of Sandra's house.

The compound looked exactly as Uche remembered from months ago. Uche stared silently through the window. His hands rested nervously on his knees.

Beside him sat his mother, Ngozi Obi, dressed elegantly in a deep blue wrapper with a matching headscarf, there was peace in her face Uche had not seen in years. Yet her eyes carried concern as she studied the compound.

In the front passenger seat sat Mr. Godwin their Physical and Health Education teacher at Wellington Junior High School.

"You ready?" he asked quietly. Uche inhaled deeply.

"No," he admitted softly. Mr. Godwin smiled faintly. "Good. That means your heart is still working."

Inside the house, Sandra lay weakly on a thin mattress in her room. Fever burned through her body.

A damp cloth rested across her forehead while sweat soaked lightly into the faded bed sheet beneath her. Her body felt heavy and exhausted after days of sickness. For the first time in months, she had not gone out hawking plantain chips.

The room smelled faintly of menthol ointment and heat. Suddenly, footsteps approached. Her step-mother, Chioma, entered carrying a plastic bowl of watery pap.

Sandra looked up weakly in confusion. The woman was smiling. Actually smiling.

"My daughter," Chioma said unusually softly, "how are you feeling now?"

Sandra blinked slowly. The sudden affection felt unnatural. Always so distant.

Chioma sat beside her and touched her forehead gently in a way she never had before. "There are visitors in the sitting room," she continued carefully, "important people."

Sandra frowned weakly. "Who?"

"I don't know them well," Chioma replied quickly. "But listen to me..."

Her voice lowered immediately.

"Do not follow strangers anywhere."

Sandra stared at her step-mother in disbelief.

This was the same woman who barely showed her kindness for years; the same woman who withheld her love. Now suddenly she sounded protective. "Something is wrong," she told herself.

Meanwhile, tension filled the sitting room outside. Sandra's father paced angrily across the room while Uche, his mother, and Mr. Godwin sat opposite him on old worn-out chairs beneath a slowly rotating ceiling fan.

"I don't understand this nonsense," the man snapped bitterly. "You cannot just come here and carry my daughter away like property."

Mr. Godwin remained calm. "Nobody said she is property."

"Then why are you here?" Uche stayed silent, his jaw tight with emotion as he looked around the familiar house where Sandra had suffered for so long. Sadness seemed trapped inside the building itself.

Sandra's father pointed aggressively toward the door. "I should send all of you out tonight."

That was when Mr.

Godwin's expression changed slightly. "Try it," he said quietly. The room fell silent.

The PHE teacher adjusted his glasses helplessly to read. "You allowed an underage girl roam the streets hawking instead of sending her to senior high school. If you push me to the wall I will call the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons."

Sandra's father froze immediately. Even Chioma, now standing near the doorway, looked visibly shaken. Mr. Godwin leaned forward calmly. "So let us avoid threats and behave like civilized adults."

At that exact moment, Sandra appeared weakly near the corridor entrance.

The room went silent again. She wore a faded yellow gown, and fever still lingered visibly in her tired eyes. Her hair looked rough from sickness, and she leaned lightly against the wall for support.

At first, she recognized only Mr. Godwin.

"Uncle Godwin," her voice sounded weak but surprised. She embraced him and sat beside him. Then her eyes shifted toward Uche. The young man seated at the other side of Mr. Godwin looked familiar, yet different, much bigger now, broader shoulders and sharper jawline.

His skin glowed healthier, and his neatly trimmed haircut suited the elegant haircut and jeans he wore. Even the way he sat carried quiet confidence she had never seen before.

For several confused seconds, Sandra simply stared.

Then her gaze moved toward the elegant middle-aged woman beside him. She had never seen her before.

The argument resumed briefly after her. Voices rose. Her father insisted Sandra belonged with the family while Mr. Godwin argued she deserved education and a better life.

The woman beside Uche spoke softly. "My son came because he never forgot her."

"My son." The words lingered in Sandra's head. Her weakness slowly melted and resumed quicker and harder. Her eyes widened slowly. She looked back at Uche again. And suddenly, she saw him. Not merely the handsome stranger before her. But the boy she once taught how to read. The boy who dreamed impossibly big dreams. "Uche..." Her voice broke completely.

Uche stood immediately. The next moment, Sandra rushed toward him despite her weakness and threw herself into his arms. Tears exploded from her instantly as moments of pain, loneliness, fear, and longing

finally collapsed inside her chest.

Uche held her tightly. Neither of them spoke for several seconds.

They simply held onto each other while the room watched silently.

Then Sandra turned suddenly toward Uche's mother. Something deep inside her broke completely. She embraced the older woman desperately, clinging to her wrapper as tears soaked into the fabric.

Ngozi held her gently at once. And for the first time in years, Sandra felt warmth that resembled motherhood. Real motherhood. Not tolerance. Not obligation. Love.

Inside her mind, a quiet thought whispered painfully: "I have finally gotten a mother."

The room remained tense afterward as discussions continued. Finally, Mr. Godwin raised one hand, "Enough," he said firmly. "Let the girl decide."

Silence followed. Everyone looked toward Sandra. Her father folded his arms stubbornly. Chioma avoided eye contact completely.

Sandra wiped tears slowly from her face before speaking. "Should I stay hawking plantain chips while my mates are in school?"

Nobody answered.

She looked directly toward her step-mother. "Should I remain in a house where my own stepmother warned me never to call her mother?"

Chioma lowered her eyes instantly.

Sandra turned back toward Ngozi and clung tightly to her arm again.

"I have finally gotten a mother," she whispered.

The decision was made. Without wasting time, Sandra hurried into her room and packed her few belongings into an old travel bag - two dresses, sandals, school notebooks she never stopped keeping.

When she finally stepped outside with the bag trembling in her hands, the late afternoon sun glowed warmly across the compound.

Neighbors watched openly now. Children gathered near the gate whispering excitedly.

Sandra paused briefly beside the beautiful sky-blue jeep. Then she entered the vehicle beside Uche and Ngozi. As the jeep slowly pulled away from the compound, Sandra looked back only once. Not with sadness. Not with regret. But with the quiet realization that her old life was finally ending behind her.

THE END

In our next publication we start a new series: *The Leaf of Life*.

Don't miss it.

Poem of the Week

GENERAL AGUIYI IRONSII

Gen. J. T. U. Aguiyi Ironsi -
Murdered in a coup by soldiers,
The very men he loved so much.

A soldier with a heart of steel,
He stood fearlessly upon the battlefield,
Yet never fell in action.

He fought with the utmost zeal,
And won his wars with weapons worn and blunt;
He overcame every challenge,
To the admiration of all.

No one thought more deeply
Of his country than he did -
His every thought,
His every breath,
His every heartbeat,
Belonged to Nigeria.

Free of fear of death in man
Could never hold him captive,
Nor keep him from the battlefield,
He marched wherever duty called,
Unshaken by danger,
Unbowed by death.

No one thought for his country
More fiercely than he fought.
Gallant. Brilliant. Spartan.
A soldier of uncommon courage,
A patriot of rare devotion.

Go round the world,
Search among every soldier you know;
Search through history,
And you may never find another
Quite like him.

Then and now,
His name still echoes
Through the corridors of history -
General J. T. U. Aguiyi Ironsi,
A soldier who gave his life to his country,
And whose memory
Refuses to die.

By Ihueze Peter Emenike
08161170766

AUTHOR OF THE WEEK

Prof. Ihekweazu Mmadubuike

Professor Ihekweazu Mmadubuike is a distinguished Nigerian academic, author, poet and public intellectual whose career has spanned literature, education and public service. He is widely recognised for his contributions to Nigerian literature and for his commitment to the development of education and intellectual life in Nigeria.

Born in Nigeria, Mmadubuike pursued higher education and established himself as a scholar of literature and the humanities. His academic career took him through teaching, research, and university administration, where he influenced generations of students and scholars through his intellectual work.

As an author, Professor Mmadubuike has written extensively on literature, culture, society and the Nigerian experience. His writings reflect a deep interest in African identity, social values, politics and the role of literature in addressing the challenges confronting society.

Beyond his literary and academic achievements, Mmadubuike has also served in important public and educational positions. His enduring contribution lies in the combination of scholarship, writing and public service, making him an important figure in Nigeria's intellectual and literary history.

Abia At 35

Abia At 35: The Journey Of God's Own State — From Creation To A New Era

By Dr. Emmanuel Meribolo, SSG - Abia State

Thirty-five years ago, on Tuesday, August 27, 1991, a new State was born in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

By proclamation of the then Military President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, Abia State was carved out of the old Imo State as part of another phase in Nigeria's continuing search for administrative balance, development and greater opportunities for people to govern themselves closer to home. Abia was one of the States created by the Babangida administration on that historic day.

But the story of Abia did not begin on August 27, 1991.

The fulfilment in Lagos was merely the prelude of a dream that had been nurtured for years by men and women who believed that the communities making up the proposed State had enough in common—historically, culturally and economically—to constitute a viable political and administrative unit.

Long before the Federal Government pronounced the State into existence, there had been sustained agitation for its creation. Historical accounts of the Abia State Movement record that a formal demand for the creation of the State was presented as far back as July 3, 1980. Among those associated with that struggle were eminent sons of the area, including Dr. Michael Ikemokuna Okpara, former Premier of the Eastern Region; B. A. Wachukwu; Dr. M. A. O. Agbara; Dr. Anjika Ezike; Senator S. M. Ojukwu; J. O. J. Okesie; S. U. Nwaganga; Professor C. Ogburny and several others who worked through the Abia State Movement.

Another important intellectual contribution came through what became known as the Abia Charter of Equity, Professor Anthony Ndulue Nzeko, who served as Secretary of the Charter of Equity Committee, is among those identified with that effort. The Charter reflected the desire of the founders that the different parts of the proposed State should live together in fairness, mutual respect and equitable political participation.

The founding vision was therefore bigger than the creation of another administrative territory. It was the vision of a State that would be united, productive,

equitable and capable of harnessing the energy, enterprise and intellectual resources of its people. One contemporary account of the movement captured that in the description of the proposed Abia as a State that should be happy, prosperous and fair to all its constituent parts.

And so, when the dream finally became reality in 1991, the new State carried within its name the geography of its beginnings.

A — Aba.
B — Bende.
I — Isikwuato.

A — Afikpo.
From the initial letters of those four major administrative and cultural blocs came the name Abia.

At its creation, therefore, Abia was geographically larger than it is today. Afikpo and surrounding areas that are today in Ebonyi State were part of the original Abia. Five years later, on October 1, 1996, the military administration of General Sani Abacha created Ebonyi State from portions of Abia and Enugu States. Afikpo consequently became part of Ebonyi, leaving the present configuration of Abia State.

Yet the name Abia remained—a permanent historical reminder of the circumstances of its birth. The capital of the new State was established at Umuahia, while Aba, already famous across Nigeria and West Africa as a centre of commerce, craftsmanship and manufacturing, naturally emerged as its commercial capital.

But Abia was inheriting much more than towns and boundaries.

It inherited a remarkable historical legacy.

This is the land of Arochuku, once the heart of the influential Aro commercial and cultural network that extended across much of pre-colonial southeastern Nigeria. It is the land of Aba, whose women entered the pages of African history through the famous Women's War of 1929—the great anti-colonial uprising remembered popularly as the Aba Women's Riot.

It is the land of Umuahia, which played an important role during the Nigerian Civil War and today hosts the National War Museum, preserving memories of one of the most consequential periods in Nigeria's history.

It is the homeland of General Johnson Thomas Umuahakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi,

Nigeria's first military Head of State and the first Nigerian army officer to become a Major General—a son of Umuahia whose life remains inseparable from the history of the Nigerian nation.

It is also the homeland of Dr. Michael Ikemokuna Okpara, one of the most celebrated administrators of Nigeria's First Republic, whose years as Premier of the old Eastern Region became associated with agricultural development.



Gov. Alex Otti.

industrialisation and public-sector investment.

Thus, when Abia was created in 1991, it was a young State resting on an old civilisation.

THE PIONEERING YEARS

The responsibility of transforming the proclamation of August 27 into a functioning government fell first to Group Captain Frank Ajoba, the pioneer Military Administrator.

There was no magnificent Government House waiting for the new administration. There were no fully developed ministries, departments or public works. Accounts of the period recall how existing local government and educational facilities in Umuahia had to be adapted rapidly to accommodate the machinery of the new State.

It was government almost from scratch.

Officers had to be created. Personnel had to be deployed. Assets inherited from Imo State had to be identified. Ministries had to be established. A treasury had to function. Roads, schools and hospitals had to be administered. Most importantly, people drawn from previously existing administrative units had to begin seeing themselves as citizens of one new State.

That was the task of the pioneer administration. Abajoba's tenure was

short—of the birth of the State in August 1991 until the transition to civilian government in early 1992—but his place in history remains secure as the man who supervised the difficult first steps of Abia's institutional life.

Then came democracy. Following the December 1992 gubernatorial election, Dr. Ogburny Onu of the National Republican Convention became the first democratically elected

The Charter reflected the desire of the founders that the different parts of the proposed State should live together in fairness, mutual respect and equitable political participation.

Governor of Abia State.

For a young State, his administration represented another important phase—moving from emergency establishment to institution building.

Education became one of the enduring legacies of that era. In 1992, what became the Abia State Polytechnic, Aba—now appropriately renamed Dr. Ogburny Onu Polytechnic—was established. The institution formally traces its establishment to October 2, 1992.

Nigeria's turbulent Third Republic, however, was short-lived.

Following the return of military rule in November 1993, a succession of military administrators governed Abia: Chinyere Ike Nwosu, Temi Ejor, Moses Fasanya and Anthony Obi, following the pioneering tenure of Frank Ajoba. Collectively, these military administrators sustained the institutions of the young State through a difficult national period until Nigeria's final transition to democratic government in 1999.

One event during that military period permanently altered the map of Abia.

The creation of Ebonyi State in 1996 meant the departure of Afikpo from Abia. The original four-bloc geographical composition from which the acronym Abia emerged was thus changed, although the

historical name remained.

THE BEGINNING OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

On May 29, 1999, democratic government returned to Nigeria and Orji Uzor Kalu became Governor of Abia State.

His administration served two terms, from 1999 to 2007, and marked the beginning of what would become twenty-four uninterrupted years of elected administrations under three successive governors before the political transition of 2023.

It was during this period that one of the most dramatic moments in Abia's sporting history occurred.

The people's beloved Enyimba International Football Club of Aba rose from Nigerian football to the summit of African club football.

In 2003, Enyimba became the first Nigerian club to win the CAF Champions League. As if one continental crown were not enough, the People's Elephant returned in 2004 and won the title again, becoming back-to-back African champions. The club subsequently added CAF Super Cup titles and has remained one of Nigeria's most decorated football institutions.

For a generation of Abians, those victories were about more than football.

They told Africa something familiar about Aba: when Aba decides to compete, it does not easily accept second place.

In 2007, Chief Theodore Ahamufe Ofi succeeded Orji Uzor Kalu as Governor and served two terms until 2015.

His eight years represented another stage in the physical and institutional development of the State, including continued efforts at expanding government infrastructure and strengthening the administrative presence of the State in Umuahia.

In 2015, Dr. Okesie Victor Ikpeazu, an academic and scientist from Obingwa, became Governor. He too served two terms, completing his tenure on May 29, 2023.

His administration placed particular public emphasis on the *Ma-d-e-i-n-A-B-i* identity—drawing national attention once again to the ingenuity of Aba's shoemakers, garment makers, fabricators and small-scale manufacturers.

Across these different administrations, the State

experienced progress in some areas and serious challenges in others. Like most evolving societies, the Abia story has never been a straight line.

There have been periods of achievement. There have been periods of disappointment.

There have been great expectations and difficult economic realities.

There have been successes in education, commerce, sports and human capital development, alongside persistent challenges in roads, urban infrastructure, sanitation, public institutions, salaries, pensions, healthcare and industrial development. But through changing governments and changing circumstances, one asset remained constant: the Abia spirit.

THE ENTERPRISING PEOPLE OF GOD'S OWN STATE

Perhaps no account of Abia can be complete without understanding its people. The Abian is traditionally enterprising.

Commerce is not merely an occupation here; for many families it is a culture passed from one generation to another.

The Aba entrepreneur sees opportunity where others see difficulty.

The Aro trader begins from a single shop and dreams of becoming an industrialist.

The shoemaker studies an imported shoe and asks not where it came from, but how it can be produced in Aba.

The garment maker turns fabric into fashion.

The fabricator turns metal into machinery.

The farmer in Bende, Ikweano, Isikwuato, Umuahia, Ukwu, Chafia and other parts of the State wrestles value from the soil.

The professional from Abia can be found in universities, boardrooms, hospitals, courts, financial institutions and centres of technological innovation across Nigeria and around the world.

This indigenously entrepreneurial energy made Aba one of West Africa's most recognisable centres of small and medium-scale enterprise.

Long before phrases such as 'local content' and 'economic diversification' became popular development language, Abians were already practising them.

To be continued



Sporting Ambassador

Otti Pledges Support for Inclusive Sports as Abia Hosts Para Powerlifting Championship

By Ananachi Uzoukwu



Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti, reaffirmed his administration's commitment to inclusive sports development as the state hosted the first Open National Para Powerlifting Championship.

The championship, which brought together para-athletes from different parts of Nigeria, was sponsored by the Abia State Government as part of efforts to promote sports development and create opportunities for persons with disabilities.

It ran from August 19 to 23, 2026, at the indoor sports hall of the Umuahia Township Stadium.

Edo State emerged the overall winners with six gold, two silver and three bronze medals while Enugu State emerged second with four gold medals. Host Abia State came second with two gold, two silver and two bronze medals. Delta State finished fourth with two gold, two silver and one bronze medal.

Declaring the championship open, Governor Otti, while noting that the event was more than a sporting competition, described it as a celebration of ability, courage and inclusion.

The Governor, represented by the Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobilor Ananaba, described para powerlifting as a sport that required strength, discipline, mental toughness and dedication,

saying the athletes had demonstrated resilience by overcoming challenges and pursuing excellence.

"Today is not just an opening of a sporting competition, it is a celebration of ability, courage, determination, inclusion, limitless potential, and human spirit."

"Every athlete standing before us today has overcome challenges that would have discouraged many, yet you have chosen to focus on what is possible rather than what is impossible," he said.

Sir Ananaba assured para-athletes that the state government would continue to support initiatives that promoted inclusion and provided platforms for persons with disabilities to excel in sports and other areas of life.

According to the Commissioner, the state government's sponsorship of the championship reflected its commitment to ensuring that no section of society was excluded from sports development.

"Today marks the beginning of what we hope will continue to be a lasting sporting tradition."

"We want the first edition of this championship to set a standard for future editions and to establish Abia as a welcoming home for para-sports," he added.

Sir Ananaba commended athletes who travelled from across the country to participate in the championship, assuring them that

their achievement went beyond the medals they might win.

The Commissioner pointed out that the Otti-led administration viewed disability as no barrier to opportunity, dignity and achievement, stressing that sports remained an important avenue for employment, talent development, national unity, discipline and healthy living.

"As a government, we believe that disability should never be a barrier to opportunity, dignity, and achievement for national contribution."

"This is why this administration has continued to place sports and youth development among priorities," Sir Ananaba stated.

He said the decision to host the championship in Abia was deliberate, as the state sought to establish itself not only as a commercial and entrepreneurial centre but also as a destination for sports excellence and inclusive sporting development.

Ananaba urged the athletes to compete fairly and display sportsmanship throughout the championship.

Speaking on behalf of the Nigeria Para Powerlifting Federation, its Vice-President, Akutekwe Patrick, commended Governor Otti for hosting and sponsoring the championship.

Akutekwe described Governor Otti as the first

governor in the South-East to sponsor and host a para-powerlifting competition.

He also commended the federation's President, James Owadi, whom he described as a philanthropist, for personally sponsoring a national para-powerlifting competition. He added that Owadi had also invited the federation to Benue State for another championship scheduled for February 2027.

Akutekwe, a pioneer of para-powerlifting who began competing in the sport in 1991, recalled that he had won seven gold medals and

one bronze medal for Nigeria before retiring from active competition.

In his remarks, the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Sports, Raymond Ukwu, also commended the state government for hosting the event, describing it as the first national competition of its kind to be held in the state since its creation.

Similarly, the Secretary of the Abia State Sports Council, Jerry Basil Udeh, expressed appreciation to the governor for sponsoring and hosting the event, describing it as the first national competition of its kind to be held in the state since its creation.



Sporting Ambassador

Sporting
AMBASSADOR
With Jacob Joseph



London Derby: Arsenal, Chelsea Set for Fierce Battle

By Joseph Jacob



Declan Rice (L) and Moisés Caicedo in a midfield battle.

The biggest clash of the new English Premier League season is set to take centre stage this weekend when defending champions Arsenal welcome Chelsea to the Emirates Stadium in what promises to be a thrilling London showdown.

Both sides made impressive starts to the new campaign. Arsenal opened their title defence in commanding fashion, dismantling newly promoted Coventry City 3-0, while Chelsea survived a much tougher encounter against Fulham, edging the Cottagers 2-2.

Although it is still early in the season, Arsenal have already given a strong indication that they remain one of the teams to beat. Manager Mikel Arteta appears to have maintained control of a settled squad, with the Gunners retaining much of the core that delivered the Premier League title last season. Their opening-day performance was particularly encouraging, combining attacking quality, defensive organisation and the confidence of reigning champions.

Chelsea, however, are expected to provide a much sterner test. The Blues have entered the new campaign with renewed ambition and will be determined to prove that they can compete with Arsenal for domestic honours. Their narrow victory over Fulham showed character, even though their performance was not as convincing as Arsenal's against Coventry.

Their first league meeting came on November 30, 2025 at Stamford Bridge, where the two sides played

out a 1-1 draw. Trevoh Chalobah put Chelsea ahead before Arsenal's Mikel Merino restored parity. Chelsea, however, were forced to play for more than 50 minutes with 10 men after Moisés Caicedo was sent off in the 38' minute.

The two teams met again on January 14, 2026, this time in the first leg of the EFL Cup semi-final at Stamford Bridge. Arsenal emerged victorious in a dramatic encounter, winning 3-2. Chelsea's Alejandro Garnacho scored twice, but goals from Ben White, Viktor Gyökeres and Martin Zubimendi gave Arsenal the advantage going into the second leg.

The return leg at the Emirates Stadium on February 3, 2026 produced another dramatic moment. Kai Havertz struck a late goal in the 96' minute to seal Arsenal's passage to the EFL Cup final with a 4-2 aggregate victory.

The final league meeting of the season came on March 1, 2026, when Arsenal once again defeated Chelsea, this time by 2-1. Chelsea were again reduced to 10 men, underlining the difficulty they experienced against Arsenal throughout the campaign.

Much has changed since those encounters. Both clubs have strengthened their squads, new players have arrived and Chelsea have begun a new managerial era. Yet, judging by their opening performances, Arsenal appear to have retained the psychological and competitive advantage.

But Chelsea will certainly not

arrive at the Emirates Stadium ready to surrender.

The Blues have enough quality, pace and attacking firepower to cause Arsenal serious problems, and they will be eager to erase the memories of last season's

frustrating encounters. If Arsenal become complacent, Chelsea will be more than happy to punish them and pull the rug from under the champions' feet. With the Premier League title race expected to be fiercely contested, this early-season encounter could prove to be much more than just another three points. It is an opportunity for Arsenal to announce their intentions as champions and for Chelsea to demonstrate that they are ready to challenge the established order.

Elsewhere, Everton will welcome Manchester United to the Hill Dickinson Stadium, with the Toffees still likely to remember their memorable 1-0 victory over the Red Devils on November 24, 2025. Everton played more than 80 minutes with 10 men after Idrissa Gana Gueye was sent off, yet they held on for a famous victory.

Manchester United later gained revenge in the reverse fixture, securing a narrow 1-0 victory under manager Michael Carrick. Their latest meeting promises another intense battle, with both sides desperate to establish early momentum.

Hull City will take on Aston Villa in another intriguing encounter. Aston Villa suffered a

humiliating 4-0 defeat on the opening day by Brighton, while newly promoted Hull City announced their arrival in the Premier League with a stunning 2-0 victory over Manchester United.

That victory may prove to be a flash in the pan, but it has already sent a warning to several established Premier League clubs. Aston Villa will therefore be desperate to avoid becoming the next victim of Hull City's fearless approach.

At the City Ground, Nottingham Forest will welcome Tottenham Hotspur, while Manchester City host Coventry City at the Etihad Stadium.

At Craven Cottage, Fulham will welcome Crystal Palace, with Nigeria internationals Calvin Bassey and Alex Iwobi expected to be among the players to watch.

The Amex Stadium will also be buzzing as Brighton & Hove Albion host Leeds United, while Brentford, known as the Bees, will attempt to stave off Sunderland.

Meanwhile, Newcastle United will face AFC Bournemouth at St James' Park in another fixture expected to produce plenty of attacking football.

The weekend's action will also see Ipswich Town host Liverpool, with the visitors looking to continue their strong start to the campaign.

With several major clubs already laying down early markers, this weekend promises to provide another fascinating chapter in what could become one of the most competitive Premier League seasons in recent years. And at the Emirates, all eyes will be on Arsenal and Chelsea as two ambitious London giants collide in the weekend's headline fixture.



Nigerian duo of Calvin Bassey and Alex Iwobi celebrating a goal.

Abia @ 35 The Era Of Sporting Excellence

By Chukwuemeka Ezejuru

A Abia State marks 35 years of its creation, sports has emerged as one of the sectors reflecting the renewed confidence, ambition and development vision of the administration of Governor Dr Alex Chiemura Otti, OFR.

In just over three years, Abia has recorded notable breakthroughs in elite sports, grassroots talent discovery, athlete welfare, para-sports, junior development, sports administration, infrastructure and the hosting of major regional, national and international competitions.

At the centre of the renewed drive is the Abia State Sports Council management team led by the Director of Sports, Comrade Oluoma George, working with the Honourable Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwabori Nwadianna Anuaba, sports associations, coaches, administrators and athletes.

The results are increasingly visible. From Paralympic and Commonwealth champions to schoolchildren winning national medals from the revival of handball, volleyball and basketball to growing strength in table tennis, chess, shooting, swimming, scuba diving and badminton, Abia is gradually rediscovering its sporting identity.

From Neglect to a New Sporting Culture

For years, Abia possessed abundant sporting talent but lacked the sustained institutional support required to translate that potential into consistent competitiveness.

The Otti administration has changed the narrative by positioning sports as a vehicle for youth development, employment, talent discovery, social inclusion and the projection of Abia's image.

One of the clearest signs of the renewed approach has been improved athlete welfare. Comrade Otti hosted outstanding Abia athletes and approved automatic employment for 15 athletes who won gold and silver medals at major competitions, alongside financial rewards for deserving athletes and coaches.

Comrade George has consistently credentialed the governor with reviving the Sports Council through government support for competitions, procurement of sporting equipment and rehabilitation of sporting facilities. He has, however, maintained that the gains must be consolidated through sustained investment in athlete welfare, equipment, facilities, operational logistics and the employment of outstanding athletes and coaches.

World Champions from Abia

Abia's para-athletes have provided some of the strongest international evidence of the state's sporting renaissance. At the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, Abia-born Chinyerechi Gift Mark won gold in the women's 60kg category and broke the world record twice, while Esther Nwogwu won silver in the women's 48kg category.

The achievements placed Abia firmly on the global sports map.

Nwogwu continued her remarkable run, winning a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in July 2026. This further strengthened Abia's reputation as a producer of world-class para-athletes.

The state has also moved to create platforms for athletes with disabilities. Umahia hosted the first Abia Para Badminton International Tournament in 2025, the inaugural National Open Para-Powerlifting Championships was held in the state in August 2026.

Abia finished third at the championship with two gold, two silver and two bronze medals.

For the Sports Council leadership, the message is clear: disability is not a barrier to excellence.

The Grassroots Pipeline

The Governor's Secondary Schools Unity Games, initiated together about 1,800 students from schools across the state, government officials, Comrade George described the maiden edition as historic, creating a new platform for identifying young talents.

The Impact is already becoming visible.

At the National Youth Games, Abia won medals in football, gymnastics, weightlifting, table tennis and

table tennis. More significantly, the state's overall performance improved dramatically, rising from 21st position in 2023 to sixth position in 2025.

George has consistently maintained that sustainable sports development must begin at the grassroots. That philosophy also informed the state-led gymnastics school tour launched in 2026 to identify and nurture young talents. The initiative is part broader effort to establish Abia as a centre of sporting excellence and talent exportation.

That school tour also recognised across Nigeria for the sports and seriousness of the grassroots sports development.

Seren Gold Medals and a National Title

The grassroots programme produced another remarkable result in 2026.

At the National Basic School Sports Competition in Umuahia, Abia emerged overall best athletes during its debut participation.

Young athlete Chinyere Emmanuel won a gold medal, while Divine Nwagwu added a gold and bronze medal.

The performance underscored the depth of sporting talent in Abia's schools and communities and demonstrated what can happen when young athletes are given organised opportunities to compete and develop.

Table Tennis: Abia's Junior Stars

Abia is also making significant progress in junior table tennis.

At the Offing End Foundation Championship in Calabar in 2026, Abia's young players returned with impressive medals.

Elizabeth Emekwike won gold in the girls' singles category, while Anthonia Umahia won gold in the girls' doubles category.

Chukwu David won silver in the Under-15 boys category, while Prince Ike claimed bronze.

The performance, under the guidance of Coach Ilesima Isaac, further demonstrated that Abia's talent pipeline is beginning to produce a pipeline of promising athletes capable of competing with the best across Nigeria.

East Coast Glory

Abia's young talents are also making their mark in chess.

At the South-East Chess Championship held in Anambra State from August 17 to 23, 2026, theophilus Ugochukwu Amaraufaku won a gold medal, while Anthonia Umahia won a silver medal.

The result added another discipline to Abia's growing list of sports talents.

Handball, Volleyball and Basketball

The revival has extended strongly to team sports.



The Management of Abia State Sports Council led by the Director of Sports, Abia State, Comrade Oluoma George (Middle).

Abia hosted the National Under-12 and Under-15 Handball Championships in Umuahia, attracting teams from 12 states. The state won gold in both the male and female Under-15 categories and has also returned to Nigeria's top handball league.

Volleyball has equally received a boost, with Abia returning to the Premier League and recording a historic first-place finish.

In July 2026, Umahia hosted the second phase of the Rantoro Basketball Festival, attracting teams from 11 states.

Basketball development has strengthened their momentum through the activities of international basketball stars. Prince Isaac, a basketball player, who held a basketball camp in Umuahia August 2026.

Elizabeth Emekwike won gold in the girls' singles category, while Anthonia Umahia won gold in the girls' doubles category. Chukwu David won silver in the Under-15 boys category, while Prince Ike claimed bronze.

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shooting, scuba diving, para badminton and powerlifting, the new revival is about more than trophies. The development of the sector is expected to further expand opportunities for specialised training.

Beyond the Medals

For the Otti administration, the new revival is about more than trophies. The development of the sector is expected to further expand opportunities for specialised training.

Sports can create opportunities for athletes, create jobs for medical personnel, event organisers and media practitioners, while providing young people with a positive pathway from school competition to elite performance.

It can also strengthen social inclusion, promote healthy lifestyles and project Abia positively across Nigeria and the international community.

The key challenge, however, remains sustainable.

The emerging momentum must be matched by continued investment in facilities, athlete welfare, coaching, sports science, equipment and broader government support.

Preparing for Nigeria's Biggest Sporting Event

Thirty-five years after its creation, Abia is gradually rebuilding its reputation as a sporting state.

From Ominyechi Gift Mark's world-record Paralympic exploits and Esther Nwogwu's international medals, including Commonwealth gold, to schoolchildren winning national athletics titles, from the emergence of promising junior table tennis players and chess champions, to the revival of handball, volleyball and basketball, from the 2025 Sir Nwabori Nwadianna Anuaba boxing triumph to its growing number of major competitions, the signs of a new era are becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

The work of the Abia State Sports Council management team led by Comrade Oluoma George, alongside the Ministry of Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwabori Nwadianna Anuaba, sports associations, coaches, administrators and athletes, has laid the structural foundation for the state's sporting ambitions.

In just over three years into the Otti administration, Abia is not merely rediscovering its sporting identity. It is discovering talent, redefining excellence, strengthening institutions, reviving sporting disciplines and creating a new era for a new generation of champions.

As the momentum is sustained, the school athletes, junior table tennis players, young chess champions and basketball prospects could become local, national and global stars.

At 35, Abia's sporting renaissance is becoming a compelling story of renewed ambition, growth, development and a state reclaiming its power of its sporting talent.

Recognition Beyond Abia

The progress recorded in Abia has also attracted national attention.

Comrade Oluoma George was among six selected Directors of Sports in Nigeria invited by the National Sports Commission to contribute to resolving issues that threatened the development of national sports facilities.

The invitation reflects recognition of his contributions and experience within the Nigerian sports industry and further projected Abia's vision in national sports administration.

Building the Sporting Infrastructure

The renaissance has been supported by investment in facilities and equipment.

The Indoor Sports Hall at the Umahia Township Stadium has increasingly become a venue for regional, national and international competitions, while sporting equipment has been procured and facilities rehabilitated.

The ability of Abia to host competitions in handball, volleyball, basketball, boxing,