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NATIONAL Ambassador

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Ngwa High School Old Boys Honour Abia State Governor

.As Otti Donates ₦10m To Support Students, Sets Up Committee For Renovation Of School

By Amarachi Uzoukwu, Blessing Nwokoma and Chinedu Kelechi

The Old Boys of Ngwa High School, Abayi, Aba, Abia State, have honoured Governor Alex Otti with a grand reception at the school's premises, where the governor announced a donation of ₦10 million to support financially disadvantaged students.

The event, held recently, under the chairmanship of Dr. Reginald Chika Stanley, brought together members of the Ngwa High School Old Boys Association (NHSOBA), political leaders, religious figures and other distinguished guests to celebrate the governor's achievements and strengthen ties with his alma mater.

Speaking at the reception, the President-General of NHSOBA and Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Aba, Rt. Rev. C. Ugwuzor, described the occasion as more than a formal visit by the governor, calling it a homecoming to the institution that helped shape his life.

He noted that Otti's approach to governance reflected the values of excellence, integrity and discipline associated with the school's motto, Dives Intra, which he interpreted as meaning "riches within."

The association's president-general said the governor's return underscored the enduring relationship between former students and their alma mater, while highlighting the potential of alumni associations to promote educational development and community advancement.

In his address, the Chairman of the Planning Committee, Sir Uzo Azubuike, expressed appreciation to Otti for making time to attend the reception despite the demands of his office. Azubuike recalled the governor's journey from his days as a student of the institution to his emergence as the chief executive of Abia State, describing the occasion as a return to the roots that helped shape his aspirations and character.

"We are deeply grateful that, despite your incredibly busy schedule, you have journeyed back to where it all began. Thank you for never forgetting your roots," he said.

In their goodwill messages, Chief Chibuike Achigbu, the Bishop of Aba Ngwa North Diocese, Rt. Rev. Nathan Kalu, and Professor Jasper Jumbo described Governor Otti as an outstanding student whose brilliance was evident from his secondary school days.

They expressed pride in his achievements, noting that his administration had demonstrated that transparency and accountability were attainable in governance.

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Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti (middle), with students of Ngwa High School, Aba, during a grand civic reception organised in his honour by the Ngwa High School Old Boys Association recently.

Labour Party Signs 2027 Election Peace Agreement in Abia

By Blessing Anienwe

The Labour Party in Abia State has signed the 2027 Election Peace Agreement, promising to promote peaceful political activities and obey the law before, during and after the general elections.

The agreement was signed recently, at the Police Officers' Mess in Umuahia. The meeting was organised by the Abia State Commissioner of Police, Wilfred Oluokunbo Afolabi, together with other security agencies.

The Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in Abia State, Prof. Sylvia Uchenna Agu, was also present.

After signing the agreement on behalf of the party, the Abia State Labour Party Chairman, Hon. Peter Azubuike, said the party believed in peace, good conduct and respect for the law.

Azubuike said the party's national leader and Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Otti, had always advised members to carry out their political activities peacefully and within the law.

He said the Labour Party was ready to keep its promise and ensure that its campaigns and other political activities did not cause violence or disturb the peace of the state.

The Abia State Commissioner of Police, said everyone had a role to play in ensuring peaceful elections. He said political parties, candidates, their supporters and security agencies must work together to achieve this.

He warned politicians against using their positions or power to threaten their opponents or stop other people from carrying out their lawful activities.

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Abia Govt Will Not Intimidate Journalists – Governor Otti

By Kate Okereke

The Abia State Government has assured journalists that it will not resort to threats, intimidation or harassment in its engagement with the media, describing the press as an indispensable partner in democratic governance and sustainable development.

The government also reaffirmed its commitment to transparency, accountability and open communication with journalists as part of efforts to build a New Abia.

Delivering his message at the 2026 Press Week of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Abia State Council, held at the Union's State Secretariat in Umuahia, the Governor who was represented by the Commissioner for Information, Sir Prince Okey Kanu and spoke through the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Sir Chris Onwuegbu, stated that his administration recognises the constitutional responsibilities of the media and respects the right of journalists to scrutinize government policies and hold public institutions accountable.

Speaking on the theme, "Building a New Abia: Media Democracy and Politics of Development," the Governor said a responsible and courageous press strengthens democracy, exposes shortcomings in governance and gives citizens the information they need to make informed decisions.

The governor explained that his administration had deliberately maintained open channels of communication with the media since assuming office, stressing that governance must not only be done but must also be seen, understood and assessed by the people.

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News

Ngwa High School Old Boys Honour Otti

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Responding, Otti thanked the association for the reception and reflected on his secondary school days, recalling the experiences he shared with fellow students and how many of them went on to distinguish themselves after leaving the institution.

The governor subsequently donated □10 million to the school to help students in addition to matching a N1 million donation by Prof. Jasper Jumbo, for the benefit of vulnerable pupils.

He also pledged to complete the Rev. W. J. Pollard Resource Centre, an information and communications technology (ICT) facility, alongside other ongoing projects at the school.

The reception attracted members of the 1982 graduating set, which includes the governor, the 1981 set and the association's ancient sets spanning 1961 to 1974, as well as political officeholders, religious leaders and other prominent personalities.

Held under the theme, "Together for Greater Service," the reception emphasised the importance of unity, collective responsibility and sustained commitment to societal development.

The event also reaffirmed the role of old students' associations in strengthening institutional ties, supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds and contributing to the development of their former schools through collaboration and shared responsibility.

The governor constituted a five-man committee to co-ordinate the completion of ongoing projects and address infrastructure gaps at Ngwa High School, Abayi, Aba.

Governor Otti announced the committee at the reception.

The governor, who acknowledged the contributions of the Old Boys to the development of their Alma Mater, said the committee would review the school's outstanding needs and determine how best to address them.

He named Dr. Reginald Stanley as Chairman of the committee while himself, Prince Uzor Nwachukwu and two others would serve as members. He assured the association that the Rev. Pollard Resource Centre project would be completed.

The governor, disclosed that his administration had already renovated three major buildings at the school but acknowledged that more work was required to bring the institution's facilities up to the desired standard.

He said the committee would also examine other pressing needs, including fencing the school, paving its roads and adequately stocking its libraries.

Governor Otti who argued that every child deserved a solid educational foundation regardless of economic circumstances, noted that equal access to basic education must come first before efforts to distinguish schools as centres of excellence.

He noted that his administration's policy of free and compulsory basic education was designed to ensure that every child, irrespective of family background, had access to schooling.

Governor Otti explained that the policy, which covers education up to Junior Secondary School Three, had led to a significant increase in enrolment and necessitated the recruitment of additional teachers in the state workforce.

He also referenced the scholarship programme of the Alex Otti Foundation, which supports academically gifted students from vulnerable backgrounds, stressing that leadership required balancing competing needs to ensure fairness.

"We need to start from democratisation of rights for everyone. Whether your father is rich or poor, whether you are the son of a driver or you are the son of a big man, you should be entitled to have an opportunity to go to school.

"If it is about money, my father didn't have money, but if he had, the opportunity to become who I am today, then the son of a driver, the son of my driver, should have the same opportunity to become somebody like me tomorrow. And that is what governance is about", he said.

'Abia Govt Will Not Intimidate Journalists'

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According to him, the monthly media parley provides journalists with regular opportunities to engage the governor directly, ask questions, seek clarification and obtain information on government policies, programmes, achievements and challenges.

He described the initiative as a demonstration of the administration's commitment to transparency and accountability rather than propaganda or intimidation.

The governor also highlighted the post-State Executive Council meeting briefings, which he said were designed to keep the public informed about key government decisions, policies and programmes.

He noted that the briefings help journalists report government activities with greater clarity and context, adding that an informed citizenry remains essential to sustainable development.

On press freedom, he maintained that disagreement between the media and government should not be regarded as hostility, noting that the government must be prepared to explain its decisions, correct inaccuracies and respond to legitimate criticism.

"Where there are disagreements, the proper response is dialogue, facts, and lawful engagement—not threats", he said.

However, he urged journalists to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, accuracy, fairness and responsible reporting, particularly in an era marked by misinformation, sensationalism and the rapid spread of false information through digital platforms.

He stressed that press freedom and professional responsibility were complementary pillars of a healthy democracy, urging journalists to remain committed to verification and the truth in the discharge of their duties.

Speaking on the role of the media in the development of Abia State, Governor Otti said journalists had an important responsibility to document progress, identify areas requiring improvement, promote constructive public discourse and ensure that the concerns of ordinary citizens were heard.

He said the state's development vision included functional public institutions, renewed infrastructure, improved attention to education and healthcare, a thriving business environment and increased opportunities for the people.

According to him, achieving these objectives requires not only government action but also an informed and engaged citizenry supported by a credible and independent media.

He, therefore, called on the NUJ and the wider media community to continue partnering with the state government in building a better Abia without abandoning their watchdog responsibilities.

The governor urged journalists to exercise their responsibilities with courage, fairness and professionalism, describing the media as a bridge between government and the people, a voice for the voiceless, a guardian of democratic values and a catalyst for development.

He commended the leadership and members of the NUJ Abia State Council for sustaining the yearly Press Week as a platform for professional engagement, reflection and collaboration and expressed hope that the 2026 Press Week would strengthen press freedom, deepen democratic accountability, promote responsible journalism and advance development in Abia State and Nigeria.

Governor Otti called for a society where truth is respected, questions are welcomed, journalists are not intimidated and development takes precedence over political rhetoric.

Earlier in his welcome address, the NUJ Chairman of Abia State Council, Comrade Chidi Asonye, said the press Week is not just a ritual of gathering journalists but a sacred moment for self examination, stock-taking and reaffirming the covenant with the people of Abia State and democracy itself, hence the theme for the year.

Asonye disposed that Abia witnessing a new era, adding that from Aba to Umuahia, Ohafia to Isuikwuato, there are visible attempts to redefine governance.

He said the theme challenges journalists to look beyond press statements and Press releases and interrogate policies to track projects, as well as, set the agenda for a truly new Abia.

The Abia NUJ chairman further disclosed that the 2026 Press Week was carefully lined up to reflect both spiritual, professional and developmental responsibilities of journalists.

Asonye, however, pointed that the completion of the Abia NUJ Secretariat remains dear to the union, estimating #70million for its completion. He appealed to the state government and other well meaning individuals to support the project.

Labour Party Signs Peace Agreement

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The commissioner said Governor Otti had directed security agencies to provide equal protection for all political parties and ensure that no party was treated unfairly.

He added that the Inspector-General of Police, Olafunji Disu, had also given similar instructions to ensure that all political parties are allowed to carry out their activities freely.

Afolabi warned that anyone who broke the law would be punished, no matter how highly placed or influential the person might be.

He also advised political parties to inform the security agencies before holding rallies and other public events so that adequate security could be provided.

The Commissioner of Police said the aim was to make sure that every political party could carry out its activities in a safe environment without fear or threats.

Speaking at the event, the INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner, Prof. Agu, said the main reason for signing the agreement was to prevent violence before, during and after the 2027 elections.

She urged political parties, candidates and their supporters to behave responsibly and maintain peace throughout the election period.

Prof. Agu also advised candidates who lost elections or disagreed with the results to seek justice through the courts instead of encouraging violence.

She assured political stakeholders that INEC was ready to conduct free, fair and credible elections in Abia State. She added that the commission had worked to correct the technical and other problems experienced in previous elections.

The Labour Party called on its members, supporters and the people of Abia State to remain peaceful, respect other political parties and avoid actions that could cause trouble as preparations for the 2027 general elections continue.

The party stressed that political differences should not lead to fighting, hatred or violence, adding that all political activities should be carried out in an atmosphere of peace and respect.

Experts Task Police On Gender-Based Violence Investigations

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru, Smart Chidimma, Chinenye Onyemauche, Obigbo Chinyere, Augustus Noble, Ogbonna-Goody Ihechiluru and Ulu Loveth

Police officers and prosecutors in Abia State have been urged to investigate gender-based violence (GBV) complaints diligently, protect survivors from further harm and strengthen collaboration to ensure access to justice.

The call was made during a two-day capacity-building workshop for police officers, prosecutors and other law enforcement personnel, which ended recently in Umuahia, AbiaState capital.

The training was organized under the European Union-funded Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Programme (RoLAC), in collaboration with International IDEA and WomenAid Collective (WACOL)/Tamar SARC, in cooperation with the Nigeria Police.

With the theme, "The Effective Implementation of Key Legislation and Policies that Protect the Rights of GBV Survivors," the workshop focused on improving investigations, strengthening prosecution and promoting coordinated responses to violence against women and girls.

Earlier in her remarks, one of the facilitators, DrChigoziriOjiaka, emphasized the importance of thorough investigations, accurate documentation and proper evidence collection in handling cases of violence against women and girls.

She urged police officers to preserve physical and forensic evidence, obtain detailed witness statements and conduct interviews professionally to avoid investigative gaps that could weaken cases in court.

Contributing, another expert at the workshop, MrsUju Peace Okeke, addressed access to justice, police powers and prosecutorial responsibilities. She urged law enforcement officers to stop treating domestic violence as a private family matter.

She said police officers had a duty to protect victims, investigate allegations of violence and take appropriate legal action rather than attempting to mediate cases that could constitute criminal offences.

Okeke explained that the statutory responsibilities of the police included crime prevention and detection, apprehension of offenders, preservation of law and order, protection of lives and property, and enforcement of applicable laws.

Participants also discussed cultural attitudes that discourage reporting abuse, the consequences of police inaction and the need for accountability and continuous professional training.

The facilitators stressed that gender-based violence could not be addressed effectively by law enforcement agencies alone, calling for stronger cooperation, timely information-sharing and respect for the expertise of different institutions.

Otti Commissions Projects At Nigerian Navy College

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti, has declared that his administration will sustain its support for Federal Institutions and Security Agencies operating in the state.

Governor Otti stated this recently while commissioning four completed infrastructure projects at the Nigerian Navy College of Accounts and Finance, Owerrinta.

The projects comprised a resurfaced parade ground and newly paved internal roads, executed by the Abia State Government, as well as a 10-unit, one-bedroom officers' transit accommodation building and a reconstructed swimming pool, undertaken by the Nigerian Navy.

The governor, in his speech titled; "Partnerships and Possibilities", highlighted the importance of collaboration between the state government and federal establishments.

He said the state government's intervention in the college's infrastructure was also an expression of appreciation for the Nigerian Navy's service.

The Governor commended the Nigerian Navy for supporting his administration's efforts to tackle insecurity.

Correction Of Name

This is to inform the general public that my name was wrongly entered as Dickson Chukwuebuka in my BVN Verification Number (BVN) records. I hereby state that my correct and preferred name is Dickson Uwem Okon, which I wish to maintain. All document bearing my former name remain valid and should be recognized as belonging to me the general public is hereby advised to take note of this correction

DICKSON UWEM OKON

News

Otti Promises Support For Federal Ministry Of Information

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti, has pledged to provide suitable office accommodation for the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation in the state, assuring the Ministry of government's continued support for federal institutions and projects.

Governor Otti gave the assurance recently, when the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation paid him a courtesy visit in his office at Nvosi, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area.

The governor said his administration does not discriminate between Federal and State agencies or projects, stressing that the ultimate beneficiaries of government interventions were the people living in the state.

He said that his administration operated an inclusive policy that recognised all residents of Abia as belonging to the state, irrespective of their places of origin

The governor directed the Commissioner for Information to work with the visiting delegation to identify suitable office accommodation for the ministry, and expressed confidence that the request would be addressed.

He cited his administration's interventions in federal institutions as evidence of its commitment to supporting government agencies operating in the state.

He assured the ministry that it would receive similar consideration, adding that his administration would do everything possible to support its operations and ensure its success.

The Governor also thanked the delegation for acknowledging his administration's efforts to improve infrastructure and governance, expressing satisfaction that the State's development initiatives were attracting recognition.

Governor Otti who congratulated the permanent secretary on her recent appointment, urged the Ministry to sustain its support for the State.

In her address, the leader of the delegation and permanent secretary of the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, Dr Binyerem Ukaire, expressed appreciation to Governor Otti for his goodwill and support following her appointment as a Federal Permanent Secretary.

She pledged to discharge her responsibilities with integrity, professionalism and utmost dedication, and commended the Governor for his achievements across various sectors of Abia State's economy.

Dr Ukaire noted that Governor Otti's emphasis on competence, fairness and inclusiveness distinguished him as a leader with a clear vision for governance and development.

She appealed to the State Government to provide suitable office accommodation for the Federal Information Centre in Abia to enhance its operational efficiency and improve service delivery.

The Permanent Secretary also emphasised the need to strengthen institutional cooperation and coordination between the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation and the Abia State Government, particularly in strategic communication, public enlightenment and the dissemination of development-oriented information.

In her remarks, the Head of the Federal Information Centre, Umuahia, Mrs Gloria Abiakam, thanked Governor Otti for consistently giving Federal establishments in the state a sense of belonging.

She commended the Governor's purposeful leadership, noting that his administration's achievements were evident in critical sectors, including health, education, road infrastructure and other areas of the state's economy.

Bende Forum Endorses Otti For Second Term

By Okereke Kate

The New Bende Forum, has endorsed the Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Otti, for a second term in office, adopting the Labour Party candidate, for Bende Federal Constituency election, Dr Chima Anyaso, rejecting third-term bids for elective positions across Bende.

The decisions were contained in a communiqué issued after a meeting of the forum held in Igbere, Bende Local Government Area.

The meeting brought together political stakeholders and community leaders to deliberate on governance, political representation and the future of Bende.

In the communiqué, the forum declared its support for Governor Otti to continue in office until 2031, arguing that his administration's performance should be sustained.

"Abia State has never had it so good. This good governance must continue in Abia", it stated.

The forum described itself as the political voice and assembly of the Bende people, saying its emergence under the name Bende Forum – New Abia was intended to promote unity, progress and development in Bende Local Government Area and Bende Federal Constituency.



Gov Otti

On the 2027 House of Representatives election, the forum announced its endorsement of Anyaso of the Labour Party to represent Bende Federal Constituency at the National Assembly.

According to the communiqué, the forum considered the backgrounds, antecedents and credentials of the contenders before reaching its decision, adding that it found Anyaso "fit and proper" for the position.

The endorsement was also supported through a motion moved by a chieftain of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Chief Nduaka Nworisara, calling on Bende stakeholders to rally behind Anyaso, citing the need for a common position on representation at the National Assembly.

The motion was seconded by APC chieftain Ezeogo Anyim Eke, who said his party had made its position known on the need for the House of Representatives seat to return to Bende North. He also called for support for Anyaso.

In another major resolution, the forum categorically rejected third-term bids for elective offices in Bende, stating that its position applied to both the House of Assembly and House of Representatives seats.

The forum argued that political representation should be guided by equity, fairness and progress, while criticizing individuals it accused of opposing third-term ambitions in the past but supporting it because it suited their interests.

It called on the people of Bende to consider these principles in making political decisions ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Commissioner Charges ANPC Staff On Professionalism, Editorial Policy

By Chukwuemeka Chijioke

The Abia State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Okey Kanu, has charged management and staff of the Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation (ANPC), publishers of the National Ambassador, to uphold professionalism, and focus on the principles guiding Corporations.

Kanu gave the charge during an interactive session with the management and staff of the Corporation, where he expressed concern over the content of some of the corporation's publications.

He particularly advised members of the Editorial Department, which he described as the heartbeat of the corporation, to exhibit professionalism and work according to the editorial policy of the corporation.

Kanu urged the staff to strictly adhere to the editorial policies, guidelines and operational principles governing the government-owned media establishment, warning that the government would no longer condone acts of indiscipline or deliberate deviation from established standards.

Also speaking, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information, Sir Chris Onwuegbu, advised the staff to remain committed to the rules and regulations guiding the corporation, urging them not to engage in practices that could undermine its objectives.

In his remarks, the General Manager of Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation, Hon. Jones Nnanna Ike, pledged that editorial staff will work, according to the pieces of advice given by the commissioner.

Responding on behalf of the Editorial Department, the Editor of National Ambassador Newspaper, Deacon Chukwuemeka Egejuru, thanked the Commissioner for taking time to interact with the staff and address issues affecting the corporation.

Egejuru appealed to the Commissioner to convey the department's heartfelt apologies to the performing governor, Dr. Alex Otti, over the identified shortcomings. He assured that necessary steps would be taken to prevent a recurrence.

In a vote of thanks, Mrs. Ihuoma Egbeogu, appreciated the commissioner for the engagement and his constructive observations, assuring him that members of staff would strive to live up to expectations.

NATIONAL Ambassador "Uplift the people, project the nation"

News

NANS JCC Names Ogbonnaya Onu Poly Rector Patron

From Uzoigwe Grace, Aba

The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Joint Campus Committee (JCC), Abia State, has inaugurated Comrade Richard Chijoke Njoku and his executive team, for a one-year tenure, while conferring the title of Patron on the Rector of Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic (OOPOLY), Aba, Dr. Christopher Okoro Kalu.

Njoku, an ND II student in the Department of Legal Studies, School of Mass Communication, Media and Legal Studies, OOPOLY, emerged unopposed in the chairmanship election held recently, at Abia State College of Health Sciences and Management Technology, Aba. The chairmanship position had been zoned to the polytechnic.

Speaking during the inauguration, Njoku called for unity among students, extending an olive branch to those who supported other candidates during the election.

"Today, I accept this mandate with gratitude, humility and a clear understanding that leadership requires sacrifice, discipline and accountability. I accept it with an unwavering commitment to give Nigerian students the best: students first, Abia stronger," he added.

In a related development, the Rector of OOPOLY, Dr. Christopher Okoro Kalu, was conferred with the title of Patron of NANS JCC, Abia State, in recognition of his support for students and contributions to the growth of the association.

The conferment followed a transition in the association's staff advisory leadership. The rector was commended for his cordial working relationship with the association and his contributions to advancing the interests of Nigerian students in Abia State and beyond.

Addressing the gathering, Okoro commended NANS JCC, Abia State, for remaining steadfast despite the challenges it had faced.

He also praised the Abia State Government, through the Commissioner for Tertiary Education, Prof. Eme Uche Eme, for prioritising education.

The rector reiterated the need to place students' interests at the centre of educational policies and decisions, stressing that their welfare and future must remain priorities.

He also acknowledged the contributions of the Unubiko Foundation, founded by Chief James Ume, to educational development, noting that the foundation had supported more than 1,000 students in pursuing their academic aspirations.

As part of his support for the association, Okoro announced a donation of N1 million to NANS JCC, Abia State, on behalf of the Unubiko Foundation.

Governor's Wife Advises Arochukwu Women To Harness Culture, Tourism For Economic Growth

By Chibunna Ikeokwu

The wife of Abia State Governor, Mrs Priscilla Otti, has called on the Nzuko Arochukwu Women's Wing Worldwide, to harness the kingdom's rich cultural heritage and tourism potential to drive economic growth, create jobs and promote sustainable development.

Mrs Otti made the call at Agrey Memorial College, Arochukwu, during the 2026 mass rally organised by the women's wing, with the theme, "Arochukwu Women Empowered Through Culture, Tourism and Investment."

Addressing participants at the event, the Abia First Lady acknowledged the Eze Aro of Arochukwu Kingdom, Dr. Eberechukwu Orji, and other dignitaries, expressing pride in the kingdom's traditional institution.

She congratulated the leadership of Arochukwu Women Worldwide for providing a platform that promotes unity, youth development, cultural preservation and community advancement.

The wife of the governor commended the women's organisation for its contributions to community development and the welfare of the people, stressing that women should not be seen merely as beneficiaries of development but as active partners and drivers of progress.

She described the rally's theme as timely, noting that Arochukwu's rich history, traditional institutions, ancient trade networks, cultural festivals and historical landmarks offered enormous opportunities for tourism and economic development.

According to her, historical attractions such as Ibini Ukpabi, popularly known as the Long Juju of Arochukwu, reflect the uniqueness and depth of the kingdom's cultural heritage.

She, however, stressed that the heritage must go beyond celebrations and storytelling to become a source of economic value, employment and sustainable livelihoods.



Mrs Priscilla Gov Otti

The governor's wife identified hospitality, indigenous fashion, arts and crafts, entertainment and cultural tourism as areas where investments could create opportunities for local businesses and empower residents.

She called for deliberate investments, skills development, strategic partnerships and innovation to unlock these opportunities, adding that Arochukwu women had a significant role to play in the kingdom's transformation.

Mrs Otti also highlighted the importance of infrastructure in boosting tourism and economic activities, commending the ongoing infrastructural development under the administration of Governor Alex Otti.

She further acknowledged the contributions of Arochukwu indigenes working to translate the governor's development vision into reality.

In his remarks, the Eze Aro of Arochukwu Kingdom, His Eminence, Dr. Orji, urged women to preserve their cultural heritage, promote tourism, invest in businesses and embrace entrepreneurship as essential pillars of the kingdom's development.

The monarch said the future of Arochukwu could not be determined solely within the king's palace or by men, but also through the contributions of women in homes, markets, classrooms and boardrooms.

He described the women gathered at the rally as evidence that the vision of an inclusive and progressive Arochukwu was gradually becoming a reality.

Eze Aro urged mothers to teach their children to respect elders, uphold traditional customs, wear indigenous attire, speak the Arochukwu language and appreciate local cuisine.

He also encouraged parents to involve their children in cultural activities, describing the traditional Ojojo dance showcased at the event as a beautiful expression of the kingdom's rich heritage.

The monarch identified several attractions that could promote tourism in Arochukwu, including Ibini Ukpabi, the Arochukwu waterfalls, the 79 Steps, traditional shrines, rivers, diaspora settlements and colonial-era buildings.

He noted that these historical sites and cultural assets could attract visitors, encourage cultural exchange and stimulate economic activities within the kingdom.

According to him, tourists are increasingly interested in authentic cultural experiences, including traditional music, dance, indigenous cuisine, customs and the hospitality of local communities.

Earlier, the President-General of the Nzuko Arochukwu Women's Wing Worldwide, Ezinne Chibuzo Onyekwere, welcomed participants to the 2026 mass rally, describing the gathering as unique and significant.

She explained that the yearly rally had been suspended for two years due to misunderstandings within the organisation, adding that the period had been used to resolve internal issues and restore unity.

Onyekwere thanked God for the safe journeys of participants and expressed appreciation to Mrs Otti for making time to attend the event despite her busy schedule.

She also highlighted the organisation's efforts to empower women and young people through vocational skills acquisition in catering, tailoring, event decoration, gele tying, cosmetology and confectionery production.

According to her, many members had benefited from the programmes, which were designed to promote self-reliance and economic independence.

The president-general called on stakeholders to support the organisation's initiatives and contribute to the development of Arochukwu Kingdom.

Mayor Urges Youths To Shun Evil Actions

From Nwokoma Blessing, Aba

The Mayor of Osisioma Ngwa Local Government Area, Chidi Agu, has urged the youths to abstain from actions that are detrimental to the endearing peace being enjoyed in Osisioma Ngwa Local Government and by extension Abia State.

The local government boss, stated this at Obuzo Civic Hall in Uratta Autonomous Community, during the keenly contested youths election of the community.

Agu, who was represented in the event by the Chief of Staff, Obinna Denwosu, insisted that youths are veritable instruments that propel development if their inherent positive potentials are harnessed. He employed them to maintain decorum even after the election as government will take drastic actions against any person or group that dear puncture the peace been enjoyed.

The council boss enjoined the youths to commit their time to positive ventures. He further tasked them to be actively involved in the electioneering process to return the governor, Dr. Alex Otti, in order to continue the transformational developments across the state economy.

Speaking to the youths, especially the elected leaders, the Supervisory Councillor for Education, Youth and Sports, Osisioma Ngwa Local Government Area, Miss Edith Marculey, warned against the winner takes it all syndrome and misappropriation of the funds that may be acruable to the youth body by the leaders.

She urged the youths to make peace their watchword and contribute meaningfully to the developmental strides of their communities.

Announcing the outcome of the election, the General Secretary of Osisioma Ngwa Youth Congress Frank Nwogu, declared Mr Udo Nnambu, as the dully elected President, Akobundu Chinonso Vice-President, Mr Sunny, Secretary General, Mr Sunday Favour, Financial Secretary, Jim Godswill, Assistant Financial Secretary, and others.

Nnambu, unbehalf of other elected officers promised to work assiduously to restore peace, decorum respect which are instrumental to meaningful development in any society.

He expressed gratitude to all actors in the political bloc for doing the right thing. He then extended the olive branch to all contestants to come and join him to build the village everybody will be proud of, insisting that the village belongs to everyone.

Editorial

The Menace Of Counterfeit Products

The growing circulation of fake, adulterated and substandard products in Nigerian markets is a serious public health threat. From medicines and food to beverages, cosmetics and household products, counterfeiters exploit consumers' trust and expose unsuspecting people to avoidable risks.

Many fake products are packaged to resemble genuine brands. Consumers may buy and use them without knowing they are dangerous. Beyond financial loss, the consequences include serious illness, organ damage and, in extreme cases, death.

Fake medicines are particularly dangerous. A counterfeit drug may contain wrong ingredients, incorrect dosages, harmful contaminants or no active pharmaceutical ingredient. It may fail to treat an illness, worsen a patient's condition or contribute to antimicrobial resistance, especially when antibiotics are falsified. Patients relying on fake antimalarials, antibiotics and medicines for blood pressure or diabetes may suffer severe complications while believing they are receiving effective treatment.

The dangers extend beyond medicines. Contaminated food and beverages can cause food poisoning and infections, while unsafe cosmetics may trigger skin irritation, burns, allergic reactions or exposure to harmful chemicals. Products manufactured or packaged in unhygienic conditions can also introduce dangerous substances into the body.

Nigeria has had painful reminders of these risks. The contamination of the My Pikin teething mixture with diethylene glycol, which caused acute kidney failure among children, remains a tragic example. In July 2026, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) warned Nigerians about suspected counterfeit products mimicking Forxiga, a medicine used to manage diabetes, heart failure and kidney disease. The agency cautioned that such products could contain incorrect ingredients or harmful contaminants.

NAFDAC occupies a central position in combating this menace. Its responsibility to regulate the manufacture, importation, distribution and sale of food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices and other regulated products is critical to consumer protection. Through inspections, laboratory testing, market surveillance, seizures, public alerts and prosecution, it must ensure unsafe products are identified and removed.

NAFDAC reported removing 7,210 products from circulation after inspecting 6,233 facilities nationwide between May and July 2026. It also disclosed 64 convictions for counterfeiting in one year. These actions demonstrate the importance of enforcement, but the continued presence of suspected fake products shows that more remains to be done.

The agency must strengthen surveillance, especially at major markets, border points, warehouses, ports and distribution centres. It should collaborate more closely with the Nigeria Customs Service, the Police, the Standards Organisation of Nigeria, the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria and other bodies to identify criminal networks. Offenders must be prosecuted consistently, with penalties that deter others.

Public enlightenment must also be intensified. Consumers should buy medicines only from licensed pharmacies and authorised outlets, examine packaging, seals, registration details and expiry dates, and be wary of unusually cheap products. A NAFDAC registration number alone is not conclusive proof of authenticity. Suspicious products should be reported through the agency's official channels.

Manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and retailers must put public safety above unlawful profit. Those who knowingly produce, import or distribute dangerous fake products should face the law. Market associations and community leaders should discourage illegal trade and report suspicious activities.

Consumers must resist patronising unverified products simply because they are cheaper or readily available. Social media allegations should be reported responsibly and verified rather than treated as established facts.

The fight against fake products cannot be left to NAFDAC alone. Government, manufacturers, distributors, healthcare professionals, market leaders, the media and consumers all have a responsibility to protect the public. Allowing dangerous products to circulate freely puts lives at risk.

NAFDAC must remain vigilant, proactive and firm in enforcing its mandate. Nigerians deserve products that are safe, properly regulated and fit for consumption. Protecting the marketplace from counterfeit and substandard goods is not merely a regulatory obligation; it is a fundamental public health responsibility for everyone.

NATIONAL Ambassador
"Uplift the people, project the nation"

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The Menace Of Drug Abuse Among Nigerian Youths

Dear Editor,

I wish to use the medium of your respected newspaper to express my deep concern over the increasing rate of drug abuse among Nigerian youths, particularly the dangerous substance popularly known as Mkpuru Mmiri.

Drug abuse has become a serious social and public health problem in Nigeria. Mkpuru Mmiri, a local name commonly associated with crystal methamphetamine, is a highly addictive and dangerous substance that has affected the lives of many young people, especially in parts of southeastern Nigeria.

It is unfortunate that some youths who should be concentrating on their education, careers and personal development have become victims of substance abuse. Some engage in drug consumption because of peer pressure, unemployment, curiosity, frustration, depression and the desire to experience temporary excitement.

The consequences of this dangerous habit are devastating. Drug abuse can lead to addiction, mental health problems, violent behaviour, poor academic performance, damaged relationships and, in severe cases, death. It also contributes to insecurity, criminal activities and the breakdown of family relationships.

More disturbing is the fact that some young people who engage in this habit are gradually losing their sense of responsibility and direction in life. Parents are worried, communities are becoming uncomfortable, and the future of many promising youths is being threatened.

I therefore call on the Federal and State Governments, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), religious organisations, traditional rulers and non-governmental organisations to intensify campaigns against drug abuse.

Furthermore, parents should pay closer attention to their children's behaviour and associations. Schools should organise regular seminars, awareness programmes and counselling sessions to educate students about the dangers of drug abuse. The government should also provide rehabilitation centres and professional support for those already struggling with addiction rather than treating them only as criminals.

The media also has an important responsibility to educate the public through investigative reports, documentaries, interviews and public enlightenment programmes.

In conclusion, the fight against Mkpuru Mmiri and other dangerous substances should be a collective responsibility. Nigerian youths are the future of this country, and we cannot afford to lose them to drug addiction. It is time for everyone to rise and take action before the situation becomes worse.

I hope this letter will receive the attention it deserves and encourage meaningful action from the appropriate authorities.

Sunday Grace
Write from Umuahia

NATIONAL Ambassador "Uplift the people, project the nation"



Abuja Digest

with Sophina Ovuike
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NOA Wins ARCON Award For Public Information Campaign Excellence

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) has received the Public Information Campaign of the Year Award, at the 2026 Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) Special Recognition Awards, in recognition of its efforts to promote civic education, public enlightenment and effective government communication.

The award was presented recently, at the Balmoral Event Centre, Ikeja, Lagos, bringing together stakeholders from the public and private sectors, advertising professionals, corporate executives and other industry players to celebrate excellence and innovation in advertising and marketing communications.

The Director-General of NOA, Mallam Lanre Issa-Onilu, was represented at the ceremony by the agency's Director of Communication and Media, Bala Musa, who received the award on his behalf.

The recognition highlights the agency's contributions to strategic communication, national value reorientation and the dissemination of government policies and programmes to Nigerians across the country.

Reacting to the honour, Issa-Onilu described the award as an endorsement of NOA's renewed commitment to innovative public communication and stronger citizen engagement.

He emphasized that effective public information campaigns were essential to national development, noting that they help build public trust, promote responsible citizenship and bridge the communication gap between the government and the people.

The director-general reaffirmed the agency's determination to deepen public understanding of government policies, promote the National Values Charter, strengthen national unity and encourage positive behavioural change among citizens.

He dedicated the award to the agency's management and staff nationwide, particularly personnel working at the grassroots, whose dedication and professionalism continue to strengthen NOA's visibility and impact in communities.

Issa-Onilu also commended ARCON for recognising the strategic role of public sector communication in national development. He said the honour would further encourage the agency to develop innovative, inclusive and citizen-centred communication strategies.

According to him, NOA will continue to utilise its nationwide operational structure, traditional and digital media platforms, as well as strategic partnerships, to promote informed citizenship, national cohesion and sustainable behavioural change.

Other awards presented at the ceremony recognised achievements in consumer response management, sponsorship marketing, brand reinvention, innovation and other areas of advertising and marketing communications.

The award represents another milestone in NOA's efforts to reposition public orientation as an important instrument for national transformation, while strengthening the delivery of impactful information campaigns to Nigerians across the country.

Minister State FG's Actions To Better Living Conditions For Nigerians

Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Senator Abubakar Bagudu, has said the Federal Government is shifting its focus from economic stabilisation to ensuring that the benefits of ongoing reforms translate into improved living conditions for Nigerians.



Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Senator Abubakar Bagudu

Bagudu stated this at the 32nd Nigerian Economic Summit (NES#32), which concluded in Abuja recently, stressing that the success of President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms would ultimately be measured by their impact on households, businesses and communities.

According to the minister, the difficult reforms implemented by the administration were necessary to stabilise the economy, attract investments and lay the foundation for sustainable development and inclusive growth.

"Now that we have achieved greater stability, the focus must be on ensuring our people feel the benefits," he said.

Bagudu explained that the administration was working to ensure economic growth creates productive employment, expands investment opportunities and improves the welfare of citizens.

He identified the National Development Plan (NDP) 2026–2030 as a major framework for aligning national priorities, public policies, budgetary allocations and investment decisions towards building a diversified, productive and competitive economy.

The plan, he said, supports Nigeria's ambition of achieving a $1 trillion economy by 2030.

The minister reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to aligning budgetary resources with the plan's priorities and strengthening implementation monitoring to ensure that government policies produce measurable development outcomes.

Bagudu identified agriculture and grassroots enterprise development as critical areas for accelerating economic growth, noting that findings from the agricultural census indicated that at least 42 million Nigerian households engage in some form of agricultural activity.

He, however, observed that many farming households continued to face challenges, including limited access to quality seeds, essential agricultural inputs and improved farming practices.

To address these constraints, he called for stronger public-private partnerships to boost agricultural productivity, strengthen domestic value chains and attract investments into productive sectors.

He also advocated the strategic deployment of public resources to reduce investment risks and encourage private capital to flow into sectors capable of generating jobs and expanding economic opportunities.

The minister further identified Nigeria's 8,809 wards as important units for identifying local economic opportunities and directing development interventions to communities.

He urged the federal, state and local governments to work collaboratively to unlock the country's productive potential and ensure that economic opportunities reach Nigerians at the grassroots.

On human capital development, Bagudu stressed the importance of foundational skills, child nutrition and workforce development in preparing young Nigerians for emerging employment and business opportunities.

He urged government institutions, private-sector operators and development partners to strengthen collaboration in these areas.

The minister also highlighted financing and investment-support mechanisms provided through the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture and National Agricultural Development Fund as important instruments for supporting productive enterprises.

Meanwhile, the incoming Chairman of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), Omoboyede Olusanya, announced five commitments aimed at strengthening the organisation's contribution to Nigeria's economic development.

The commitments include publishing an annual NESG Accountability Index to track promises and progress; deepening evidence-based research to support policy recommendations; expanding engagement with subnational governments; collaborating with private-sector stakeholders to improve project bankability and mobilise investments; and broadening participation across sectors and economic groups.

Olusanya said the summit's deliberations had reinforced the need to move beyond dialogue to implementation, noting that economic reforms require time to deliver their full benefits even as the immediate economic pressures facing citizens must be addressed.

He observed that sustained engagement between government and the private sector had contributed to reforms across sectors, including health, pensions, oil and gas, and taxation.

According to him, continued collaboration remains essential to addressing national challenges and sustaining progress.

The incoming chairman also warned that policy frameworks and summit recommendations would struggle to deliver tangible results without commercially viable projects capable of attracting private investment.

He urged stakeholders to participate in subsequent editions of the summit and hold the NESG accountable for delivering on its commitments.

In her vote of thanks on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning and the NESG, the Permanent Secretary, Dr Deborah Odoh, said the ultimate value of the summit would be determined by the implementation of its recommendations and the results delivered to Nigerians.

She called for sustained collaboration among federal and state governments, private-sector operators, development partners, research institutions and other stakeholders to address the country's socioeconomic challenges.

Odoh also commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who was represented at the summit by Vice President Kashim Shettima, for supporting collaboration between government and the private sector to develop practical and sustainable solutions to Nigeria's development challenges.

She emphasized the importance of credible data, research and evidence-based policymaking, acknowledging the contributions of academics, economists, researchers, government agencies and technical institutions to the summit's deliberations.

TUC Rejects FG's N70,000 Allowance

Nigerian workers struggling with rising food prices, transportation costs and other household expenses may have to wait longer for improved earnings, as the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) has rejected the Federal Government's proposed ₦70,000 wage award, demanding an immediate salary increase instead.

The labour organisation said temporary allowances were insufficient to ease the financial pressure on workers, urging the government to introduce a permanent pay rise that would provide more reliable relief to employees and their families.

The TUC proposed that the salary of the lowest-paid worker should be increased to ₦300,000 from the current ₦70,000, with corresponding adjustments to other salary levels.

The congress made its position known in a statement issued recently by its President, Festus Osifo, and Secretary-General, N.A. Toro, following a National Administrative Council meeting held in Abuja on October 8, 2026.

According to the organisation, workers are facing mounting difficulties in meeting basic needs, including feeding, transportation, healthcare and other essential expenses, making a substantial salary review necessary.

The congress said it had written to the Federal Government through the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, seeking an urgent review of workers' salaries.

It argued that the government did not have to wait for negotiations on the national minimum wage before increasing salaries, noting that there was no legal ceiling on how much an employer could pay workers.

The labour body also expressed concern over the alleged incomplete implementation of the wage award agreed upon by the Federal Government and organised labour on October 2, 2023.

According to the TUC, some workers are still owed one or two months' payments, while others have reportedly not received the allowance at all.

It further alleged that payments were irregular for some beneficiaries, forcing workers to repeatedly demand their entitlements.

The congress said that more than 80 per cent of states and workers in the informal sector had not benefited from any form of wage award.

Feature

Isieke Estate Thirsts For Government Intervention

By Ogbonnaya-Goddy Ihechiluru

Before sunrise at Isieke Housing Estate in Umuahia, some residents are already on the streets with buckets, kegs and gallons, searching for water. For many, the day begins with the struggle to secure water for basic domestic needs.

The search often starts as early as 6 a.m. Water is essential for cooking, bathing, washing and drinking, yet a reliable, affordable supply remains elusive.

The cost is another concern. Residents say they pay more than people in neighbouring communities, putting pressure on household budgets.

In Nkata and along Uwalaka Street, a keg of water reportedly sells for □50, two for □100 and five for □200. Within Isieke Housing Estate, however, residents pay between □75 and □150 for a keg or gallon, depending on the seller and prevailing circumstances.

For families buying water daily, the difference adds up. Businesses within the estate are also affected, as operators say the high cost and unreliable availability of water disrupt production and raise operating expenses.

The hardship is particularly difficult for elderly residents, children and people managing busy work schedules, who must compete for limited supplies or spend scarce time and money securing water each day.

Private boreholes might appear to offer a solution, but residents say the area's underground water conditions make drilling difficult and expensive.

Elder Samuel Emezue, a landlord and former Secretary of the Estate Association, explained that underground water in the area is generally hard and unsuitable for drinking. According to him, the terrain means that drilling a borehole does not necessarily guarantee access to potable water.

"As a result of the estate being situated in a place that has no water, waters found underneath are hard waters. If dug, what people could get is hard water which is not potable for drinking," he said.

Emezue added that boreholes in the estate require drilling rigs rather than manual methods, increasing the cost. Residents who invest in private boreholes may still need alternative drinking-water sources if the water obtained is unsuitable for consumption. For households unable to afford drilling, buying water remains the practical option.

The estate has previously benefited from government intervention intended to address its water needs. Emezue said



the Abia State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (ASOPADEC) provided a borehole under the supervision of the Deputy Speaker of the Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Austin Okezie Nmeregini.

The facility, however, is currently not functioning, leaving residents unable to benefit from the public infrastructure. Emezue said the Deputy Speaker had reportedly made financial contributions towards its repair, but it had yet to resume operation.

"Government, through ASOPADEC, which was given to the Deputy Speaker of Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon Austin Okezie Nmeregini sank a borehole, but currently it is not functional. The Deputy Speaker reported that he has put in some money to fix the borehole," he said.

The facility's continued failure highlights concerns about maintaining public infrastructure.

Emezue believes that the authorities should assess the area's underground water conditions and identify a location where potable water can be obtained.

"The only way for government is to locate a spot for potable water and sink a borehole, as water is life and without water we can do nothing," he said.

His recommendation underscores the need for technical assessment before another borehole project, ensuring public funds provide safe, sustainable water.

The shortage is also affecting commercial activities, particularly businesses that depend on a regular water supply.

Anelechi Sympathy, a community leader and director of a block industry, said the cost of drilling a borehole is prohibitive for business operators. According to him, drilling in the estate costs more than □4 million, while water tanker operators charge about □20,000 per tank.

"To sink a borehole would cost over 4 million naira, which is costly, thereby causing a hindrance in the block business. Tankers charge 20 thousand naira per tank," he said.

For a block industry, where water is essential to production, the expense adds considerably to operating costs. Sympathy said businesses in neighbouring Nkata enjoy access to cheaper water, putting operators in Isieke at a financial disadvantage.

The shortage affects household welfare, local businesses and the cost of goods and services.

Residents need a coordinated, sustainable intervention. Rather than undertaking another borehole project without adequate investigation, the relevant authorities should commission a hydrogeological survey to identify suitable sources of potable water.

The Abia State Government, ASOPADEC and other relevant agencies should also inspect the existing public borehole, establish why it stopped functioning and determine what is required to restore it. Any rehabilitation should be supported by a clear maintenance arrangement to prevent another breakdown.

Where underground water is unsuitable, alternatives such as a treated community water system, reliable piped supply or strategically located water distribution facilities should be considered. Regular water testing is also necessary to protect residents.

For residents of Isieke Housing Estate, access to safe and affordable water should not remain a daily struggle. They are appealing to Abia State Governor, Dr Alex Chioma Otti, to intervene and facilitate a lasting solution. They say the governor has demonstrated commitment to addressing developmental challenges across sectors and communities and hope their plight will receive similar attention.

Residents want the government to identify a dependable source of potable water, restore the existing borehole or provide an alternative supply system for households and businesses. They believe this would ease their financial burden and improve living and working conditions.

Their demand is straightforward: a reliable source of potable water that serves residents and supports economic activities. The people of Isieke are not merely asking for another borehole; they are seeking Governor Otti's intervention to end a persistent hardship and secure a sustainable solution to a basic human need.

Opinion

Nigeria Decides 2027 And The Burden Of Proof

By Dakuku Peterside

A voter who has spent hours in a queue should not need to understand computer servers to believe that a ballot will be counted. The obligation runs the other way. Those entrusted with conducting an election must demonstrate that its outcome reflects the choices citizens made. As Nigeria approaches 2027, this should be the measure of every technological innovation: does it make electoral power more accountable to the people whose consent gives that power legitimacy? BuyMaps

The attraction of technology is understandable. Where human discretion has attracted suspicion, a machine can seem to promise impartiality. Biometric checks offer firmer identification; digital records offer opportunities for scrutiny. Artificial intelligence could improve logistics and detect inconsistencies. Yet the promise becomes dangerous when people mistake sophistication for integrity. Every system still reflects decisions about procurement, access, oversight and what happens when something goes wrong. Those decisions remain human, even when their consequences appear on a screen.

Nigeria's 2023 elections exposed the fragility of the relationship between technical capability and public confidence. The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System, BVAS, sought to strengthen voter identification through biometric checks. The INEC Results Viewing Portal, IReV, enabled public access to images of polling unit result sheets. Their functions differed, but their democratic value lay in making key stages of the process more open to verification. BuyMaps

Delays in uploading presidential results undermined that promise. They did not, by themselves, establish that votes had been altered. Equally, the lack of expected information mattered. Citizens were entitled to ask what failed, what remained secure, and how to check the records. A transparency mechanism cannot build confidence through its promised availability and then become irrelevant when people need to consult it. Its failure requires an explanation proportionate to the trust invested in it. CheckVoting Info

Behind these questions stood people who had paid a price to participate. A trader who closed a stall had surrendered income. A worker who travelled home to vote had committed money and time. When the count became difficult to follow, their uncertainty concerned more than a preferred candidate. It touched the belief that peaceful participation mattered. An election can leave institutions formally intact while making citizens less willing to place their hopes in them again. CheckVoting Info

This is the democratic cost Nigeria must avoid in 2027. Confidence cannot be repaired by asking people to ask fewer questions. It grows when institutions give better answers and make those answers examinable. Before deploying AI, INEC should explain its intended tasks, the data it will process and the suppliers involved. Responsibility for errors must be identifiable in advance. Public scrutiny belongs before deployment, where it can still influence decisions, and after failure.

Communication during disruption deserves its own preparation. An institution should be able to say what it knows, what remains uncertain, and when it will provide another update. Silence invites speculation; premature certainty can destroy credibility when later evidence contradicts it. Clear communication also protects officials from having every operational problem interpreted as deliberate manipulation. It gives the public a basis for distinguishing an interruption from a breach and a documented correction from an unexplained alteration. The aim is neither automatic suspicion nor automatic acceptance, but judgement informed by records that remain available for independent examination after the immediate political controversy has passed.

Independent testing should therefore produce evidence of readiness under actual operating conditions. The examination must include interrupted power, poor connectivity, heavy demand, and uneven technical support. Publish relevant findings and corrective actions without exposing sensitive information. A successful demonstration is reassuring; a serious attempt to discover failure is more useful. The public needs to know which weaknesses were found, which were corrected and which limitations still require practical safeguards.

Those safeguards must reach the polling unit. Officials need clear, lawful instructions for equipment and network problems, supported by rehearsals and accessible technical assistance. Voters and observers should understand the applicable procedures. Otherwise, discretion exercised under pressure can appear indistinguishable from favouritism. Preparedness also means designing for elderly voters, people with disabilities and people whose biometric details are difficult to capture. Efficiency has little democratic value if its apparent success conceals citizens who could not participate.

Verification must continue through the count. A traceable link must exist between the polling unit record, its published image, and the figures carried through collation. Where discrepancies appear, a functioning process must investigate and explain them. Merely allowing citizens to see a problem is insufficient. Visibility without a route to correction can deepen the sense of powerlessness. Technology should make irregularities harder to conceal and evidence-based challenges easier to pursue.

AI can support this work, but its authority needs firm boundaries. A system that flags a suspicious record raises a question; it does not establish wrongdoing. Decisions affecting registration, eligibility or results must remain subject to authorised human judgement and established procedures. Human oversight must involve someone who can examine the evidence, challenge the output, and explain the decision. A signature beneath an opaque recommendation offers weak protection if the signatory cannot meaningfully assess its basis.

The information environment presents a different danger. A cloned voice could announce a false withdrawal; a fabricated security warning could discourage turnout. Such deception can damage an election without touching a result sheet. Worse, convincing fabrications create an excuse to dismiss authentic evidence as fake. Citizens may increasingly believe whatever confirms their loyalties. When disagreement extends to whether any reliable account of events is possible, democratic argument loses the common ground on which persuasion and accountability depend.

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Religion

The Supremacy of Faith!

By Bishop David oyedepo

From scriptures, we discover that we engage in faith to tap into divine virtues, which in turn enhance our value. The Bible says: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report (Hebrews 11:1-2). Also, our vision can never deliver beyond the level of faith we are operating in. Hence, the beauty and colour of every vision is a function of the quality of faith that is employed. Therefore, without faith, our vision has no substance because it is faith that defines the substance of our vision. Every act of God in our lives is only realisable via faith and as long as our faith is on fire, we remain on flight and also in command of things happening around us. Thus, it is to us according to our faith, not according to our vision (Matthew 9:29). So, if our faith is down, our life and destiny will be.

What, Then, is the Supremacy of Faith?

1.Faith Engages the Word for Performance: It engages the Word of God in order to enforce the delivery of our destiny and desires. The Bible records about Mary: …Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her (Luke 1:38).Sometimes, it may not be convenient for us but if it is commanded, we must engage in it because that's the only way to where we are going and it is what determines the happenings in our lives. That is what makes faith a vital force that gets the job done. As long as our faith is in place, we remain in command over the issues of life.

2.Faith is A Spiritual Force: Faith is neither a psychological nor philosophical force; it is a spiritual force. It is not an intellectual issue either; it is a spiritual virtue that operates within the spirit of man not in his head. As it is written: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:10). Thus, whatever is working contrary to our inheritance in Christ, faith can stop it instantly. For instance, the woman with the issue of blood had her faith intact and her health was restored immediately (Mark 5:25-34)

3 .Faith is a Spiritual Chemistry: It is the spiritual chemistry with which we quench the oppositions, clear obstacles and access our possessions. The Bible says: For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith (Mark 11:23). Every time faith is at work, a spiritual connection is established and that connection provokes the flow of virtue from God. That virtue flows to enhance our value.

4.Faith is A Living Force: It is a living force, drawn from the living Word to produce living proofs. That woman drew from Jesus, the Living Word, and a living proof was produced. Faith is not just believing that God can do something; it is being moved to do something to prove that we believe. When we are moved to act on what God commands, He is committed to perform. So, faith is an act. For it is written: But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, faith is the only way to move God in our direction and the only way to stop the devil from molesting us (Ephesians 6:16).

5.Faith is Hard Work: Faith is no cheap talk; faith is hard work. It is written: For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Hebrews 4:10-11). It requires a form of labour. We don't wish for faith but work at faith. Faith does not answer to wishes; it answers to workings, that is, working with the Word of God. Whether it is conventional faith or supernatural faith, all forms of faith draw from our Word bank or reservoir. The things on our inside are what faith draws from; it has to be there before faith can draw. The Bible says: So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17; see also 2 Peter 1:5)

faith is an asset of inestimable value, an unstoppable force which taps into the omnipotence of God, quenches all the fiery darts of the devil, addresses all satanic assaults and commits the integrity of divinity

6 .Faith is a Great Profession: Faith is no mere confession; it is a great profession. As it is written: Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised (Hebrews 10:23). Profession here connotes definite skills. Thus, it requires skills to maximise its benefits (Hebrews 5:12-14).

In summary, faith is an asset of inestimable value, an unstoppable force which taps into the omnipotence of God, quenches all the fiery darts of the devil, addresses all satanic assaults and commits the integrity of divinity. However, you cannot experience the supremacy of faith unless you are born again. Are you born again? If you are not, this is an opportunity to do so. Simply say the following prayer: Lord Jesus, I come to You today. I am a sinner. Forgive me my sins. Cleanse me with Your precious Blood. Today, I accept You as my Lord and personal Saviour. Thank You Jesus for saving me! Now, I know I am born again! For further reading, please get my books: Unlimited Power of Faith, Understanding the Power of Faith, Exploits of Faith and Born to win

I invite you to fellowship with us at the Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, Ota, the covenant home of Winners. We have four services on Sundays, holding at 6:00 a.m., 7:50 a.m., 9:40 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. respectively. I know this teaching has blessed you. Write and share your testimony with me through: Faith Tabernacle, Canaanland, Ota, P.M.B. 21688, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria; or call 01-4548070, 01-4548280; or E-mail: feedback@lfcww.org; Facebook: www.facebook.com/davidoyedepoministries/; Twitter: @DavidOyedepoMin.

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

Family Matters

Rebuilding The Family In An Age Of Broken Homes

By Ihuoma Egbeogu

The family is the foundation upon which every society is built. Within the home, a child first learns the meaning of love, discipline, responsibility, respect, forgiveness, and the distinction between right and wrong. When families are strong, communities thrive. But when families fracture, the impact reverberates far beyond the four walls of the home.

Today, families face unprecedented challenges. Marriages are breaking down, partners grow emotionally distant, and parents and children find themselves increasingly disconnected. In many households, conflict has replaced comfort.

While separation is sometimes necessary, particularly in situations involving abuse or serious danger. Many homes fall apart gradually. They break under the weight of neglect, unresolved grievances, poor communication, financial stress, infidelity, social media distraction, and a failure to keep the family unit a priority.

However, there are so many things to be considered while trying to rebuild families and restore the values that hold them together.

Effective Communication is the first step in rebuilding a broken home.

In troubled homes, meaningful communication is often the first casualty. Couples may share the same roof while living miles apart emotionally.

Rebuilding a family requires an environment where everyone can speak honestly without fear of immediate criticism or judgment. Spouses must learn to listen to understand, not just to respond. Children, too, need parents who will listen patiently to their fears, questions, and daily struggles.

Secondly,restoring respect and mutual understanding is pertinent in rebuilding a family.

Love cannot survive where disrespect is constant. Disagreements are inevitable in any marriage, but differences of opinion do not have to turn into hostility.

Varying personalities, viewpoints, and habits can be managed through patience, compromise, and mutual honour.

Similarly, parents should correct their children without humiliating them, while teaching young ones the value of respecting their elders and each other.

Thirdly,making intentional time for family is very important in rebuilding the family.

One of the greatest threats to modern family life is the scarcity of quality time.

Phones, social media feeds, television, demanding careers, and endless obligations slowly crowd out meaningful human connection.

Families need deliberate moments of togetherness.

Furthermore, rebuilding fractured trust is relevant in rebuilding the family.

Trust is a cornerstone of family stability, yet it is easily shattered by dishonesty, broken promises, betrayal, or infidelity.

Returning to core family values is another factor that necessitates

restoring the family. However,it calls for a return to foundational principles. Values like honesty, fidelity, hard work, compassion, accountability, and respect for others should never be treated as outdated concepts,they are essential for a healthy society.

In addition,faith and spiritual foundation is necessary in rebuilding the home.

For families of faith, rebuilding the home involves nurturing their shared spiritual life.

While prayer does not eliminate life's challenges, it fosters an environment of humility, wisdom, forgiveness, and mutual support.

More so,seeking help from professional counseling, pastoral care, family therapy, and guidance from trusted mentors can provide crucial tools for recovery.

A family does not need to be flawless to be strong. What matters most is a shared commitment to acknowledge mistakes, take responsibility, seek help when needed, and keep working toward a healthier home.

A restored family raises emotionally secure children. Secure children build vibrant communities. And vibrant communities create a stronger nation.



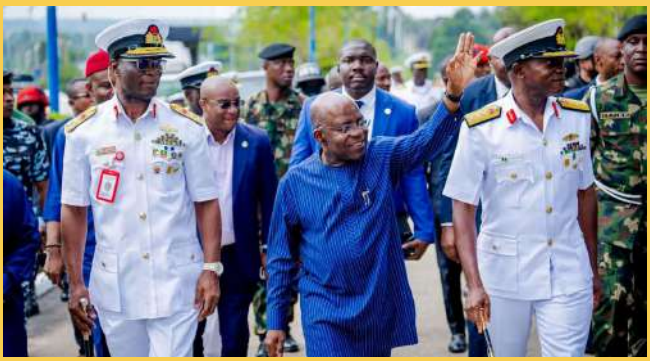
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FULL PAGE COLOUR	₦350,000.00	17,500	26,250	393,750
FULL PAGE BLACK & WHITE	₦300,000.00	15,000	22,500	337,500
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QUARTER PAGE	₦150,000.00	7,500	11,250	168,750
CHANGE OF NAME	₦7,000.00	350	525	7,875

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Photos Speak



L-R : Flag Officer Commanding, Naval Training Command, Rear Admiral Ebiobowei Zipele, Gov Alex Otti of Abia State, Comm., Nigerian Navy College of Accounts and Finance, (NNCAF), Owerrinta, Comdore Babatunde Quadri and Speaker, Abia State House of Assembly, Rt Hon Emmanuel Emeruwa, during the commissioning of the College's internal roads, parade ground, reconstructed swimming pool and 10 by one-bedroom units for junior officers at (NNCAF), Owerrinta



Gov Alex Otti of Abia State (c) being welcomed by Nigerian Navy College of Accounts and Finance, (NNCAF), Owerrinta, while he marched with the Flag Officer Commanding, Naval Training Command, Rear Admiral Ebiobowei Zipele (1st L), Comm, Nigerian Navy College of Accounts and Finance, (NNCAF), Owerrinta, Comdore Babatunde Quadri (1st R), during the commissioning of the College's roads, parade ground, swimming pool and 10 by one-bedroom units for junior officers at (NNCAF), Owerrinta.



Dr Alex Otti (4th right) at Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia, during the official welcome ceremony for the five-member Abia contingent that represented Nigeria at the International Schools Debate Championship in Doha, Qatar



The five-member Abia contingent that represented Nigeria at the International Schools Debate Championship in Doha, Qatar, during their official welcome ceremony organised by the Abia State Government at Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia.



R-L: Gov Alex Otti of Abia, Former Deputy Gov of Abia State, Sir Ude Oko Chukwu, Chief of Staff to Abia Gov, Pst Caleb Ajagba PhD and Attorney General and Comm for Justice, Abia State, Mr Ikechukwu Uwana, SAN, during the Thanksgiving service of the Abia State Judiciary as they mark their 2026/27 legal year at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Chapel, FMC Umuahia



L-R: Former Deputy Gov of Abia State, Sir Ude Oko Chukwu and Gov Alex Otti of Abia, during the Thanksgiving service of the Abia State Judiciary as they mark their 2026/27 legal year at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Chapel, FMC Umuahia



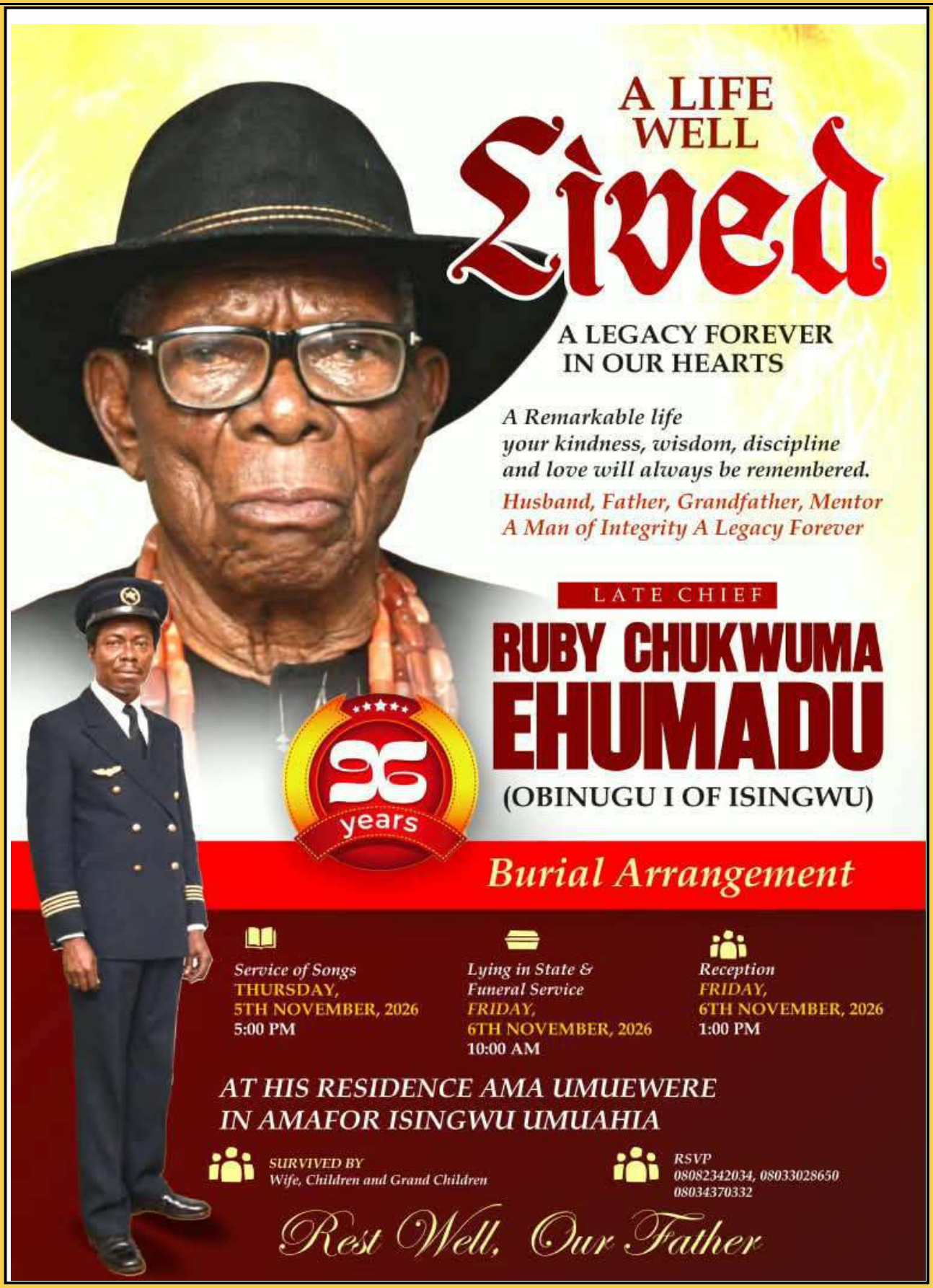
Mrs Priscilla Otti, First Lady of Abia State (6th right), during a group photograph at Aggrey Memorial College, Arochukwu, at the 2026 mass rally organised by the Women's Wing.



Staff of the Abia Newspaper and Publishing Corporation seated during the recent working visit of the Abia State Commissioner for Information to the corporation.

Photos by: Chukwu Chidiebere and James N

Photos Speak



NATIONAL Ambassador "Uplift the people, project the nation"

News



Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara (5th left), and the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Chief Nyesom Wike (6th Left) and others, during a recent meeting in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Abia Diaspora Home-Coming To Drive Investment, Skills Transfer- Rev Onu

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State is set to host its Diaspora Global Homecoming from December 18 to 21, 2026, in a move to attract investment, promote knowledge transfer and strengthen ties with indigenes living abroad.

The Chief Executive Officer and Executive Secretary of the Abia State Diaspora Commission, Rev. Annie Onu, disclosed this at a press conference in her office, where she unveiled plans for the programme.

She said the event would bring Abians from different parts of the world together to assess developments in their home state, explore business opportunities and identify practical ways to contribute to its growth.

Onu said the initiative was designed to deepen engagement between the state government and the diaspora community and create opportunities for investment, entrepreneurship, professional collaboration and sustainable development.

She added that the programme would enable participants to interact with local entrepreneurs, organic farmers and other stakeholders, exchange ideas and explore partnerships that could benefit the state.

"The Abia Diaspora Global Homecoming is an opportunity for Abians living abroad to return home, witness the progress being made in the state and contribute their knowledge, skills and resources to its development.

"Our brothers and sisters in the diaspora have heard about the achievements of the present administration, and they are coming in their numbers to see the progress for themselves and identify ways to support the state", Amb Onu said.

According to her, activities will begin on December 18 with a solidarity walk, followed by engagements with local content providers and organic farmers to showcase locally produced goods and explore business opportunities.

She said the sessions would also enable diaspora participants to identify products with export potential and establish partnerships that could expand access to international markets for Abia-made goods.

The commission's chief executive noted that many Abians abroad had acquired valuable professional experience and specialized skills that could support development initiatives in their home state.

"We have professionals and highly skilled Abians doing great things in different parts of the world.

"They are eager to bring their knowledge and expertise back home and contribute to the development of Abia in various capacities", she said.

Onu disclosed that the grand finale on December 21 would feature an interaction with Governor Alex Otti, providing participants with an opportunity to discuss areas of collaboration and offer ideas on how they could support the state's development agenda.

She also highlighted the potential of improved air connectivity to stimulate economic activities, attract investment and strengthen Abia's links with the international community.

The diaspora commission chief urged residents to give returning indigenes a warm reception and use the homecoming to exchange ideas and develop initiatives that could benefit their communities.

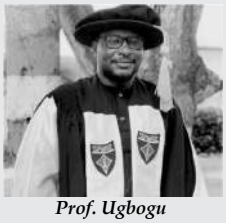
She reaffirmed the commission's commitment to supporting Abians living abroad, including addressing their educational needs and providing guidance where necessary.

Rev. Onu added that the commission was working towards establishing chapters in locations with significant Abia diaspora populations to improve communication, strengthen engagement and maintain closer links between indigenes abroad and their home state.

ABSU Gets New Vice-Chancellor

The Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has approved the appointment of Professor Amadike Ugbogu as the 9th substantive Vice-Chancellor of Abia State University (ABSU), Uturu.

The appointment, which takes effect from November 1, 2026, followed the recommendation of the university's Governing Council at its 161st Regular Meeting held on Thursday, October 29, 2026.



Prof. Ugbogu

The approval was announced in a press statement dated October 31, 2026, and signed by the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council, Rt. Hon. Agwu U. Agwu, posted by the Special Adviser to the Governor of Media and Publicity, Ferdinand Ekeoma, on his Facebook handle.

Professor Ugbogu, who is a distinguished Professor of Biochemistry, is expected to provide academic and administrative leadership for the institution as he assumes office as its substantive Vice-Chancellor.

Fubara Declares Wike His Leader At Rainbow Coalition Rally

By Opara Chimaobi

The Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has publicly declared the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, as his political leader.

Fubara made the declaration recently during the Rainbow Coalition Rally held in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital.

Speaking at the rally, the governor said that they now had a common leader in Wike, a former governor of Rivers State.

The governor's statement had attracted attention because of the political disagreement between him and Wike, which has remained a major issue in Rivers State politics.

Wike governed Rivers State from 2015 to 2023 before handing over to Fubara, in May 2023.

Since Fubara became governor, their political relationship had experienced serious disagreements, leading to divisions among political leaders and supporters in the state.

The disagreement has also affected the political atmosphere in Rivers State, with different groups taking sides in the dispute.

Against this background, Fubara's public recognition of Wike as his leader at the rally had raised questions about the future of their political relationship.

The declaration may also attract interest from their supporters and other political stakeholders who have been following developments in the state.

However, the governor's statement alone does not explain whether both men have reached a formal agreement on their political differences or how they intend to work together going forward.

The Rainbow Coalition Rally provided an opportunity for political supporters to gather in Port Harcourt, with Fubara's declaration about Wike becoming one of the major talking points.

Further details would be needed to establish whether the declaration signals a lasting reconciliation between the two political leaders and what it could mean for political activities in Rivers State ahead of future elections.

News

Adinigwe-Joshua Campaign Team Meets Women In Asa Ward

By Okechukwu Ubani

The campaign team of Adinigwe Ugochukwu Nwoke and Ahukanna Joshua Chiemena, has continued its meetings with women in Asa. The team visited IPU East, Ogwe, and Asa North wards to introduce the two candidates and explain their plans.

During the visits, the team met with women in the different communities, listened to their concerns, and discussed their hopes for the future of Ukwa East/West Federal Constituency and Ukwa West State Constituency.

The team also encouraged the women to take part in the coming elections and show interest in political activities in their communities.

According to the campaign team, women at the meetings in IPU East, Ogwe, and Asa North expressed support for Adinigwe and Joshua. They also said they would take part in the elections with their children and support Labour Party candidates.

The campaign team thanked the women for their warm welcome and active participation during the meetings.

As part of the visits, the team also went to the palace of Eze Emeka Ottah, Eze Oha III of Asa North Autonomous Community.

The traditional ruler welcomed the team and offered his blessings. The campaign team said the monarch also expressed support for Labour Party candidates.

The visit to the Palace was an opportunity for the team to pay respect to the traditional ruler and discuss political activities in the area.

The Adinigwe-Joshua Campaign Team thanked the women of IPU East, Ogwe, and Asa North for receiving them and expressing their willingness to support the candidates in the coming elections.

The team said it would continue visiting other communities to meet residents, listen to their concerns, and share information about the candidates.

South Africa Xenophobic Attacks: Otti Approves N2 M Aid For Every Bereaved Family, N1m For Each Returnee

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has approved N1 million emergency financial help for 130 eligible returnees from South Africa and N2 million for each family of Abians who died during xenophobic attacks.

The Commissioner for Information, Prince Okey Kanu, announced the approval recently, while briefing journalists on the outcome of the previous State Exco meeting presided over by Governor Otti.

Prince Kanu said the financial aid for the 130 returnees would complement the earlier support extended to 31 returnees, who had each received □1 million.

With the latest approval, according to the Commissioner, more than 160 returnees are expected to benefit from the emergency financial intervention in the coming months, including those who financed their return to Nigeria themselves.

He said; "In its bid to give a sense of belonging and help resettle stranded Abia Returnees from the Republic of South Africa, the Abia State Governor has granted approval to the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection the release of funds for the evacuation and reintegration of Abians affected by xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

"The approval includes: one, the cost of screening and a lifting hundreds stranded Abians from South Africa.

"Two, the cost of transporting the returnees to their respective and final destinations upon arrival in Nigeria.

"Three, the disbursement of 1 million Naira each to 130 eligible returnees, including self-funded returnees. This is in addition to the earlier assistance to 31 returnees who were advanced 1 million Naira each.

"Over 160 returnees will now receive the emergency 1 million Naira financial support in another month or two.

"Number four, 2 million Naira support for each family of diseased persons who passed on during the violent attacks in South Africa.

"The 100 Returnees are expected in the country sometime in November, at a date that will be communicated to you in due course".

Prince Kanu noted that the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection had also co-ordinated the reception of 12 returnees in three batches, including those assisted by the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), and facilitated their reunion with their families in different parts of Abia State and beyond.

He said the ministry was developing a long-term reintegration plan in line with the Governor's directive, explaining that the plan would address the returnees' livelihood needs, economic empowerment and other challenges associated with their resettlement.

On the State's response to sexual and gender-based violence, Prince Kanu disclosed that the Nchedo Sexual Assault Referral Centre had continued to provide services to survivors with 17 cases currently before the courts.

He added that two convictions were secured in July and described the outcomes as evidence of the present administration's commitment to protecting vulnerable groups, improving access to justice and strengthening social protection.



Rector, Dr. Christopher Okoro Kalu

Ogbonnaya Onu Poly Begins Fresh Accreditation

From Uzoigwe Grace, Aba

Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, Aba, has started another round of accreditation of its academic programmes, alongside resource verification for newly introduced programmes, as the institution intensifies efforts to meet national technical education standards.

The exercise which held at the institution recently, with a delegation from the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), led by the Director of Polytechnic and Allied Programmes, Elder Ayo Aroge.

The delegation was received at the Polytechnic's Council Chambers by the Rector, Dr. Christopher Okoro Kalu, members of the institution's management and heads of department whose programmes are scheduled for assessment.

Welcoming the team, Okoro commended the NBTE representatives for responding to the institution's requests for accreditation and related regulatory exercises. He noted that their assessment would help determine the institution's compliance with prescribed academic and resource requirements.

"Thank you for coming from within and outside South East to assess what we have been doing here," the rector said.

Okoro also recounted the institution's transition from Abia State Polytechnic to Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic, following its renaming by the Abia State Government under the administration of Governor Alex Otti, in honour of the late Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu, the state's first civilian governor.

He said the accreditation formed part of his administration's efforts to sustain academic standards and position the polytechnic among leading technical institutions in Africa.

"We are here for accreditation, and this is an exercise that must continue as we pursue our ambition of becoming one of the best polytechnics, not just in Nigeria but in Africa," he said.

The rector disclosed that the ongoing exercise was the second accreditation round under his administration, following the successful assessment of academic programmes in the previous year.

He further stated that his administration would continue to ensure that every department meets the requirements for accreditation, in line with the state government's development agenda and the Federal Government's Renewed Hope Agenda.

"The era of running unaccredited programmes in this institution is gone. Under my watch, we must ensure that the right things are done and that our programmes meet the required standards," Okoro said.

He urged the NBTE delegation to identify areas requiring improvement and communicate any deficiencies observed during the exercise. He assured the assessors that the institution remained receptive to professional scrutiny and recommendations.

"We are open to criticism, corrections and learning. When we close the door to correction, we close the door to advancement, and that is not our goal," he said.

In his response, Aroge commended the rector, management and staff for their efforts towards meeting the board's requirements, particularly in the institution's adoption of digital processes.

He expressed satisfaction with the progress observed in the institution's online systems and encouraged the heads of department involved in the exercise to make the necessary documentation and resources available to facilitate the assessment.

Aroge also assured the Polytechnic of the delegation's co-operation throughout the exercise, as the relevant departments undergo programme accreditation and resource verification.

NATIONAL Ambassador "Uplift the people, project the nation"

News

Aba Tricycle Operators Begin Grassroots Mobilization For Otti

By Amarachi Uzoukwu

The Abia State Tricycle Operators' Union (ASTOPU), Aba Zone, has started grassroots mobilisation for Governor Alex Otti's re-election in 2027.

The union also plans to integrate its members across more than 80 polling units in Aba into the Labour Party's political structure ahead of the general elections.

The ASTOPU Chairman, Mr Victor Azubike, disclosed this during a solidarity rally in Aba, where operators expressed support for the Otti led administration.

The union's chairman cited road construction and other government interventions as reasons for their backing the re-election bid of Governor Otti.

He said the Union had already mobilised its members to register and obtain their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), describing voter participation as a crucial factor in determining electoral outcomes.

"We are fully prepared for 2027 elections. Right from voters' registration, we mobilised our people to register and have their PVCs because that is the number one strength of election", Azubuike said.

He explained that the Union was working to strengthen its political presence across more than 80 polling units in Aba by integrating its members into the Labour Party structure ahead of the 2027 general elections.

According to him, the Tricycle Operators organised the rally independently to appreciate the Governor's efforts in road development and other infrastructure projects across the state.

Azubike identified the ongoing reconstruction of Uratta and Old Express roads in Aba as particularly beneficial to tricycle operators, whose businesses depend largely on accessible roads and efficient movement within the city.

He added that the Otti led administration's policies and programmes had created a more favourable operating environment for members, noting that the rally reflected their willingness to demonstrate support for the government.

Also speaking, the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Transport, Dr Obioma Nwogbe, commended the Union for its support and commitment to mobilising votes for the Labour Party in the forthcoming elections.

Anglican Bishop Urges Christians To Embrace Sacrificial Praise

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru, Onyemauche Chinenye, Augustus Noble, Ogbonna-Goody Ihechiluru and Ulu Loveth

The Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Umuahia, Rt. Rev. Geoffrey Obijuru Ibeabuchi, has urged Christians to make praise and thanksgiving a way of life, stressing that worship strengthens faith and invites divine intervention.

He made the call during the diocese's 2026 Choir Praise Day, held recently, under the theme, "Exalt Him Together."

Earlier in his sermon entitled; "Praise Renders in the Church Invokes the Power of God," the guest speaker and the Choir Master of the Church, Mr. Ihuoma Ohajuru cited Psalm 22:3 to emphasize the place of praise in Christian worship, noting that some life challenges require divine intervention beyond human efforts.

Drawing lessons from 2 Chronicles 20:21–24, the fall of Jericho's walls and the release of Paul and Silas from prison in Acts 16:25, worshippers were reminded of the power of heartfelt praise in securing divine intervention and deliverance.

Ohajuru explained that praise can help believers confront difficulties with faith and trust in God.

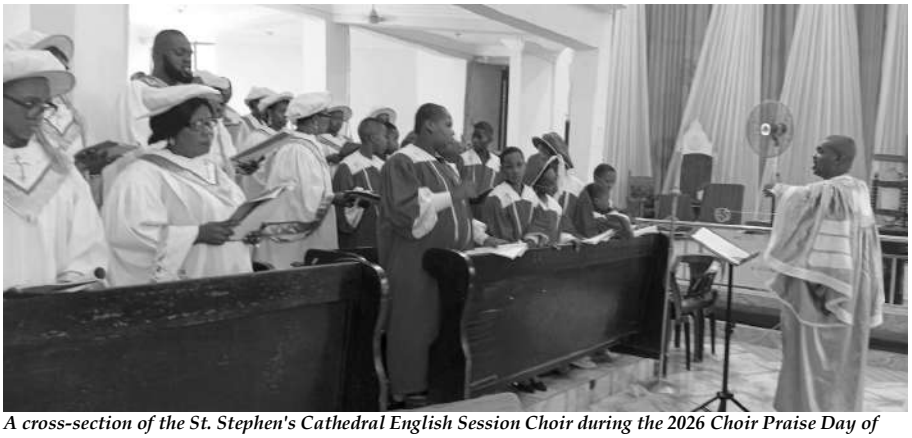
Referencing Ecclesiastes 10:10, the Choir Master likened praise to sharpening a battle axe, urging Christians to remain steadfast in worship even during difficult times. Also Citing Hebrews 13:15, he also encouraged Christian faithful to offer sacrificial praise that honours God rather than seeks human approval.

He called on church members to support the worship ministry by sponsoring musical instruments to enhance the choir's work.

Fielding questions from newsmen on the significance of the celebration, the Choir Master of St. Stephen's Cathedral English Session Choir, further, described Choir Praise Day as a yearly opportunity to promote thanksgiving and recognize the contributions of choristers to the church.

He said the theme encouraged Christians to unite in giving glory to God. He also urged young people to embrace church music as a means of deepening their faith and drawing closer to God.

The celebration highlighted the role of collective worship, sacrificial praise and music in strengthening Christian faith and devotion.



A cross-section of the St. Stephen's Cathedral English Session Choir during the 2026 Choir Praise Day of the Anglican Diocese of Umuahia, held recently, at the Cathedral in Umuahia, Abia State, under the theme, "Exalt Him Together."

2027 Polls: Local Boys Movement Declares Support For Otti, Labour Party

By Blessing Anienwe

The Labour Party State Secretariat in Umuahia was full of excitement as members of the Local Boys Movement held a rally to show their support for Abia State Governor, Alex Otti, the Labour Party, and all its candidates ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The group, which is a registered Labour Party support group, came out in large numbers. They marched into the party secretariat, singing and showing their support for Governor Otti and his government.

Speaking at the event, the leader of the Local Boys Movement and Abia State Chairman of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Comrade Chukwuma Azode, popularly known as China, said the group had visited major business areas in Umuahia to talk about the achievements of Governor Otti's government before coming to the party secretariat.

Azode said the movement was ready to work hard to win support for Governor Otti and other Labour Party candidates in the 2027 elections.

He added that members of the group would continue to visit different communities and speak to residents about the work of the present government to encourage more people to support the Labour Party.

The Abia State Labour Party Chairman, Hon. Peter Azubuike, thanked the Local Boys Movement for its support and commitment to the party.

Azubuike said the 2027 elections were not just about Governor Otti's second-term ambition but also about the future of Abia State and the need to continue the development taking place in the state.

He urged members of the movement to support all Labour Party candidates contesting for seats in the State House of Assembly, House of Representatives, and Senate.

According to him, Governor Otti needs the support of elected lawmakers who share his vision to make it easier for his government to carry out its plans for the state.

"To enable His Excellency to deliver good things to the people, we must elect a complete Labour Party team," Azubuike said.

He explained that Labour Party members in the State House of Assembly would help pass budgets and laws needed for development, while the party's representatives at the National Assembly would speak for Abia State and protect its interests.

The Labour Party chairman also urged members of the movement to protect their votes during the 2027 elections.

He said the group should encourage peaceful elections and report any attempt to intimidate voters or manipulate election results to the appropriate authorities.

As a way of appreciating his leadership and support for the party, the Local Boys Movement decorated Hon. Peter Azubuike and named him the Patron of the Local Boys Movement.

The rally ended with a call for unity and greater support for Governor Otti and all Labour Party candidates, as the party prepares for the 2027 general elections.

Emetu Pledges Support For Aba Promises Kept Carnival, Music Fiesta

By Charles Ogbonnaya

Abia State Deputy Governor, Ikechukwu Emetu, has pledged the state government's support for the second edition of the Aba Promises Kept Carnival and Music Fiesta scheduled to hold from December 11 to 13, 2026, at the Ogbonnaya Onu Polytechnic Main Campus Field, Aba.

Emetu made the pledge when he received members of the Promises Kept Socio-Cultural Initiative, led by its founder, Chief Onyeka Ernest Udeajah, during a courtesy visit to his office at Government House, Umuahia.

The deputy governor, who accepted the organisation's nomination as one of its patrons, commended the initiative for creating opportunities for young people, particularly upcoming musicians, artisans and other talented individuals, to showcase their abilities and gain recognition.

He described the carnival as an important platform for discovering and promoting young talents who might otherwise lack the opportunity to express themselves, adding that the programme would also provide residents with an opportunity to unwind and relieve the stress of daily activities during the festive season.

Emetu, who congratulated the organisers on their efforts, assured them of the state government's support and expressed optimism that the event would contribute to cultural unity, youth empowerment and the development of Abia State.

He also commended the organisers for their steadfastness and congratulated Chief Udeajah on his leadership of the initiative, expressing hope for a successful second edition of the carnival.

Earlier, Udeajah had said the delegation visited the deputy governor to inform him about the forthcoming carnival and formally present his invitation as a special guest.

Udeajah explained that the initiative was established to engage young people positively, take them off the streets and provide platforms for upcoming artists, artisans and other talented individuals to showcase their skills.

He disclosed that the 2026 edition, themed "Uniting Heritage, Celebrating Progress," would feature a three-day programme of cultural displays, talent hunts and musical performances.

According to him, the event is expected to attract more than 50,000 participants, including youth groups, cultural troupes, business leaders and other stakeholders.

The organiser also announced that popular musical artistes, including Duncan Mighty, Ugoccie and Ada Zion, would feature in the event alongside local performers.

Udeajah further disclosed that the first edition of the carnival was held last year, adding that the second edition would build on the achievements of the maiden event by expanding opportunities for young talents and promoting cultural heritage.

He called on the Deputy Governor to participate in the programme and provide the necessary guidance and support to ensure its success.

In his vote of thanks, Chief.A.E. Udeigbo expressed appreciation to the Deputy Governor for receiving the delegation despite the short notice and accepting their requests. He reaffirmed the organisation's support for the Abia State Government.

The delegation also presented Emetu with a customised carnival T-shirt, as part of the visit.

Abia State Government

Ministry Of Power And Public Utilities

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

PROJECT TITLE:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A 2 MWP SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC GENERATION SYSTEM INTEGRATED WITH A 2 MWH LITHIUM-ION BATTERY STORAGE SYSTEM AND DEDICATED TRANSMISSION NETWORK FOR ABIA STATE GOVERNMENT

RFP REFERENCE NUMBER: MPPU/AD/013/11

INTRODUCTION:
The Abia State Government (ABSG) through the Ministry of Power and Public Utilities (MPPU) invites proposals from interested Bidders for the Design, Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Commissioning of scalable sustainable 2-megawatt (2 MWp) solar photovoltaic generation system integrated with a 2-megawatt hour (2. MWh) lithium-ion battery storage facility and a dedicated transmission infrastructure to power designated government institutions, offices, and residential clusters within the Government House and Environs in Umuahia, known as ("Cluster 1 Facilities").

ABSG is committed to energy security, sustainability and reducing its carbon footprint while meeting its energy demands. In pursuit of these objectives and in response to its energy requirements, the state government through the Ministry of Power and Public Utilities (MPPU) intend proposes that the project will be jointly executed and financed in collaboration with a "Developer'' that possesses the requisite technical competence, financial capacity, and operational experience to design, finance, construct, operate, and maintain the Project under a 24-month - Build–Operate–Transfer (BOT) arrangement, in accordance with the State's Public-Private Partnership and Investment initiatives.

This proposed project is intended to provide 24/7 electricity supply to the Government House and Environs in an environmentally friendly manner which aligns with your vision and commitment to energy sufficiency in Abia State, thereby mitigating their reliance on conventional / public power sources and reducing its carbon emissions.

ABSG's target is to move as quickly as practicable possible to identify, through this RFP, the most qualified bidder that: (1) meets the needs of the government; (2) demonstrates a thorough understanding of current or pending solar energy policies, legislation, and/or regulation (3) understands the site location's regulations / requirements; and (4) can demonstrate successful implementation of comparably sized projects within Nigeria.

Interested companies should submit hardcopies and / or electronic file of their proposals to the Planning, Research and Statistics Office of Ministry of Power and Public Utilities, by November 20, 2026 @12h:00 mid-day.

Hard copies of proposals are to be deposited at the Planning, Research and Statistics office of Ministry of Power and Public Utilities, No1 Isiama AfaraRoad, Umuahia and electronic file via email: planning.MPPU@abiastate.gov.ng or saved on flash USB with password shall be submitted.

PROJECT SCOPE:
The project covers the design, construction, and commissioning of a 2-megawatt-hour (2 MWh) lithium-ion battery storage facility and dedicated transmission infrastructure to supply designated government institutions, offices, and residential clusters within the Government House and environs in Umuahia (the "Cluster 1 Facilities"). The solution must also accommodate future expansion. The key supply requirements are as follows:

Site Assessment and Design:
- Conduct a thorough site assessment to determine the optimal location for the solar power solution, considering factors such as solar radiation, shading, topography, and available land.
- Electrical and civil works design in compliance with Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA) standards;
- Design of the dedicated 33 kV transmission line and substation interfaces; and
- Integration of smart energy management, analytics, and monitoring systems for real-time performance oversight.
- Develop a detailed engineering design for the initial 1.5-Megawatt Solar Energy Solution with Energy Storage, including the layout of solar panels, mounting structures, inverters, transformers, and other necessary equipment.
- Ensure the design allows for easy scalability by incorporating flexible infrastructure and electrical systems that can accommodate future expansion up to 3 to 5-Megawatts.

Procurement and Construction:
- Procure high-quality solar panels, inverters, energy storage and management system, mounting structures, and other necessary equipment from reputable suppliers, considering the scalability requirements for future expansion including site preparation, installation of the complete solar panels and mounting structures, electrical wiring, commissioning and connection to the grid.

Electrical Infrastructure:
- Design and install the necessary electrical infrastructure, including transformers, inverters, energy storage systems, switchgear, and interconnection equipment with future scalability capacity.

Operations, Monitoring and Maintenance:
- Operate and manage the Project on a continuous 24/7 basis for the entire BOT Term.
- Carry out preventive, corrective, and predictive maintenance in line with the O&M Plan to ensure system availability and availability.
- Provide technical support, system optimization, and routine reporting to the State.
- Install a comprehensive monitoring system to track the performance of the solar energy system, including energy production, system efficiency, and any potential issues.
- Develop a maintenance plan to regularly inspect and maintain the solar panels, inverters, and other equipment to ensure optimal performance and longevity.

Training and Capacity Development:
- The Developer shall implement a structured training program for the Ministry engineers, operators, and maintenance personnel, covering:
  i. Foundational and hands-on technical training;
  ii. Joint system operations; and
  iii. OEM and advanced system management modules.

Financing and Payment Structure:
- The Project shall be jointly financed the ABSG and the Developer with Two-Year Buyout structure, under which the State takes full ownership of the infrastructure at month 24.
- Prepare a detailed financial analysis, including cost estimates for the entire project life cycle including design, permitting, construction, operation, and maintenance. This should include both capital costs (one-time expenses) and operational costs (ongoing expenses).
- Identify potential funding sources, such as grants, incentives, and partnerships.
- Develop a business case with projected returns on investment and payback periods

Project Management:
- Assign a dedicated project manager to oversee all aspects of the solar farm installation, including scalability considerations, scheduling, budgeting, and co-ordination with stakeholders.
- Ensure effective communication and collaboration among the Developer's project team, Ministry representatives, other sub-contractors, and suppliers.
- Monitor and report project progress, identify and mitigate risks, and address any issues that may impact the successful completion of the solar farm establishment.

Timeline:
- Provide a detailed project timeline, including milestones for site selection, design, permitting, construction, commissioning, training, operation and maintenance.

Budget:
- Submit a commercial offer that covers all aspects of the project, including design, construction, equipment procurement, permitting, training, operation and maintenance.

Partnerships And Stakeholder Engagement:
- Outline a strategy for engaging with key stakeholders, including state government leadership, government ministries, departments and agencies, local communities, and potential funding partners.

Environmental Impact Assessment:
- Conduct an environmental impact assessment to identify and mitigate potential environmental impacts associated with the solar farm project.

Reporting and Documentation:
- Provide details on regular progress reporting and documentation procedures, including how project updates will be communicated to key stakeholders and the public.

PRE-QUALIFICATION AND MODE OF SUBMISSION

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL:
All proposals must be submitted to department of Planning, Research and Statistics of Ministry of Power and Public Utilities Umuahia, Abia State, by November 20, 2026 @12h:00 mid-day.

Proposals submitted after the specified deadline, will not be taken into consideration.

PRE-QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT
1. All interested companies must submit hardcopies to Ministry of Power and Public Utilities
   No 1 Isiama Afara Road
   Umuahia, Abia State - Nigeria
   and / or Electronic file via email: planning.MPPU@abiastate.gov.ng or saved on USB with password of their proposals.
2. Evidence of tax payment for 3 years or tax clearance certificate.
3. Evidence of registration with CAC Evidence of Registration with Abia State Government via the Due Process Office.
4. Evidence of Payment of non-refundable tender fee.
5. Verifiable evidence of successful implementation of standalone Solar Mini-Grid Project of capacity between 2MWp – 5MWp in Nigeria.
6. Evidence of Financial Capacity to execute this project (3 years financial statements).
7. Evidence of appropriate insurance coverage for the project, including liability and performance bonds.
8. Bidders must submit the company's Health, Safety and Environment Plan.
9. Proof of relationship with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) or technical partners.
10. Letter of Recommendation from the Bank.

Signed,

Engr Ikechukwu Monday
Hon. Commissioner for Power and Public Utilities

Foreign News

Putin Praises Elon Musk, Reveals Close Contact Over Satellite Technology

Russian President Vladimir Putin has described American billionaire Elon Musk as a "real genius" and revealed that Russia maintains close contact with him over satellite technology.

Putin made the statement during the Russia-Africa Summit in Moscow, where he spoke about Russia's plans to develop its own satellite internet service, known as Rassvet.

According to a BBC report, Putin said Russia was working closely with American partners, including Musk, to develop satellite technology and prevent their satellites from interfering with one another in space.

"He is a genius, a real genius," Putin said while speaking about Musk.

Musk owns SpaceX, the American company behind Starlink, a satellite internet service that provides internet access to people in different parts of the world, including areas with poor internet connections.

Putin explained that cooperation between Russia and the United States was important to ensure that Rassvet and Starlink satellites could operate in space without disrupting each other.

He added that both countries considered such cooperation important despite their political differences.

Russia is developing Rassvet as an alternative to Starlink. However, the Russian project is still at an early stage compared with Musk's satellite network.

According to the report, Starlink has launched about 13,000 satellites, while only a few dozen Rassvet satellites are currently in orbit.

The Russian Embassy in South Africa also described Rassvet as Russia's alternative to Starlink, noting that the country was only beginning to develop its satellite internet technology.



Russian President Vladimir Putin

Putin's comments come at a time when relations between Russia and the United States have attracted renewed attention, particularly over the ongoing war in Ukraine and other international issues.

Ukraine has relied heavily on Starlink to maintain internet connections and support communication among its military forces during the war against Russia.

However, the Ukrainian military recently experienced problems with its Starlink connection after SpaceX took steps that affected access to the service. Musk confirmed that his company had deliberately taken the action.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has taken steps to improve relations with Russia. Earlier this month, Trump announced an agreement involving the importation of Russian diesel in an effort to reduce rising fuel prices linked to the US war with Iran.

Trump also temporarily eased certain sanctions against Russia.

In another development, an American citizen was released from Russian custody. Following the release, US envoy Steve Witkoff described Putin as a humanitarian.

Musk was born in South Africa before moving to Canada and later settling in the United States. His major business interests, including Tesla, SpaceX and Starlink, are based in the US.

The billionaire has also played a major role in American politics, serving as a prominent supporter and financial backer of Trump and other Republican politicians.

London Residents Live in Fear as Scaffolding Remains for Six Years

Residents of a nine-storey building in north London have said they are living in fear because scaffolding has surrounded their homes for six years. They complained that strangers have been climbing the scaffolding and standing outside their windows, making them feel unsafe in their own homes.

The scaffolding was put up at Archway Heights in 2020 after a part of the building's outer covering fell off. The housing association, People for Places, said it was installed as a safety measure while plans were being made to repair the building.

However, the housing association said it was still waiting for approval from the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) before the repair work could start.

The regulator said an application submitted in 2024 was rejected as invalid because more information was needed to show that the planned repairs would meet building safety rules.

Since then, residents have continued to live with the scaffolding, which they say has affected their safety, privacy and daily lives.

One of the residents, Natasha Dyett, moved into the building two years ago, when the scaffolding was already there. She said the situation became worse during the summer because strangers often climbed onto the structure.

Dyett said she had to keep her windows closed during the recent heatwave because she was afraid that strangers could use the scaffolding to get close to her home.

She also described a frightening incident in July when she saw someone standing outside her bedroom window.

She said she had just climbed into bed and turned over when she noticed something outside. Because she has problems with her eyesight, she rubbed her eyes to make sure she was seeing clearly. She then realised that it was a person standing outside her window.

Dyett said she shouted at the person to leave and contacted her landlord. Her landlord advised her to call the police. However, she complained that the CCTV recording had been deleted before it could be checked.

She added that residents had been reporting strangers on the scaffolding almost every week.

According to her, the people climb around the building, and she fears they may even be able to reach the roof.

The scaffolding has also reduced the amount of sunlight entering some rooms in the building. Dyett said she sometimes had to switch on the lights during the day, especially in her son's bedroom, because a metal barrier blocks much of the natural light.

She explained that using electricity during the day had increased her expenses, making life more difficult for her family.

Dyett also said that keeping the windows closed and spending long hours in dark rooms had affected their daily lives. She explained that after staying indoors for so long, they sometimes had to struggle to adjust their eyes when they went outside into the sunlight.

The long delay in repairing the building has left residents worried about their safety and frustrated by the situation.

They want the necessary approval to be granted so that the repair work can begin and the scaffolding can be removed.

For the residents of Archway Heights, the problem goes beyond the appearance of their building. They want to feel safe, protect their privacy and live comfortably without worrying about strangers climbing outside their windows.

Rihanna Says Americans Who Did Not Vote Also Contributed to Trump's Victory

By Chimaobi Opara

US-based singer Rihanna has said that Americans who failed to vote also contributed to Donald Trump's return to power and should not be ignored when discussing the country's current challenges.



The singer made the comment following a discussion involving journalist Charles M. Blow and former MSNBC host Joy Reid. During the discussion, Reid reportedly said Americans should take responsibility for the financial controversies surrounding Trump's administration because they voted him back into office for a second term.

Rihanna reacted to a video clip of the discussion that went viral on Instagram, saying that those who did not vote also played a part in the election outcome.

According to the singer, responsibility for the result should not be placed only on those who voted for Trump. She argued that eligible voters who stayed away from the polls also contributed by failing to take part in the election.

Reacting to the video, Rihanna wrote: "Believe it or not, those who didn't vote at all also did this!"

Her comment has renewed attention on the importance of voting and the role citizens play in choosing their leaders.

Voter apathy refers to a lack of interest in participating in elections. When eligible voters choose not to cast their ballots, they leave the decision to those who turn out to vote.

Rihanna's reaction highlights the view that citizens who want to influence the direction of their country should take part in elections. Voting gives people an opportunity to choose their leaders and have a say in the policies that affect their lives.

NATIONAL Ambassador "Uplift the people, project the nation"

Sporting Ambassador



Lions/Grasshoppers Legends Host U-15 South East Handball Championship

Stories by Joseph Jacob

The best U-15 handball talents from the five South-East states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo converged on Umuahia for the fourth edition of the Lions Grasshoppers Legends U-15 South-East Handball Championship.

The championship, organised in partnership with the Abia State Government, took place at the Indoor Sports Hall of the Umuahia Township Stadium, with five boys' and five girls' teams competing in a round-robin format.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, President of the Lions Grasshoppers Legends, Sir Isaac O. Isaac, recalled the glorious era when the Lions and Grasshoppers dominated handball in Nigeria.

He said the championship was established not only to give back to society but also to discover and nurture young handball talents capable of taking Nigeria and the sport to greater heights in the near future.

"Some of the talents discovered in the previous editions of this championship are now in the junior national team, while others are representing their respective states," Sir Isaac said.

The former Director of Sports of the Abia State Sports Council stressed that the primary objective was not to win at all costs but to ensure that the South-East never runs short of talented handball players.

Speaking earlier, Chairperson of the Organising Committee, Mary Nwachukwu Chima, explained that a stringent screening process had been put in place to ensure that only eligible players participated in the championship.

She disclosed that players who did not make the final cut would feature in a ceremonial match on Friday.

"The organisation is exploring means of awarding scholarships to exceptional players and hopes to organise holiday camps to ensure that the talents discovered are nurtured to stardom," she said.

Imo State won the championship with a superior performance. Host, Abia State came second and Anambra came finished third. Enugu State and Ebonyi State finished fourth and fifth respectively.

Abia Tennis Players to Get International Exposure

Abia State tennis players are set to receive greater national and international exposure as the state intensifies efforts to develop the sport and create more opportunities for its athletes.

The Chairman of the Abia State Tennis Association, Chief Samson Anagha, disclosed this during the closing ceremony of the maiden Abia South East Tennis Championship held at Aba Sports Club 1926.

Anagha urged the players not to be satisfied with merely participating in competitions, but to set their sights on reaching the highest levels of the sport.

"There's no day, week or month that sporting activities are not taking place," the chairman said, while commending the state government for creating an environment that has made such sporting activities possible.

The championship also produced impressive performances from the participating states.

In the Men's Doubles, Abia State claimed the gold medal through Ehigamuse Endurance and Akwilam Lucius, while Imo State's Akagha Samuel and Chukwuemeka Chibuike settled for silver. Enugu State's Uwandu Charles and Nwaizu Chikwesirieze won bronze.

In the Boys' U-18 Doubles, Imo State emerged champions, with Nwosu Henry and Okechukwu Emmanuel winning gold. Abia's Nweke Chibueze and Obinna Chinedu took silver, while bronze went to Abia's Nwaizu Chikwesirieze and Onuoha Prince, alongside Ebonyi's Mbam Johannes and Okoye Onyebuchi.

At the end of the championship, Imo State emerged overall champions, with host Abia finishing second and Enugu State placing third.

Declaring the championship closed on behalf of the Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobilor Nwadimma Ananaba, the Director of Sports, Comrade George Obioma, expressed appreciation to Governor Dr Alex Otti for his invaluable contribution to sports development in the state.

Obioma noted that Abia sports had "unarguably moved from where it used to be to a place of envy among other states."

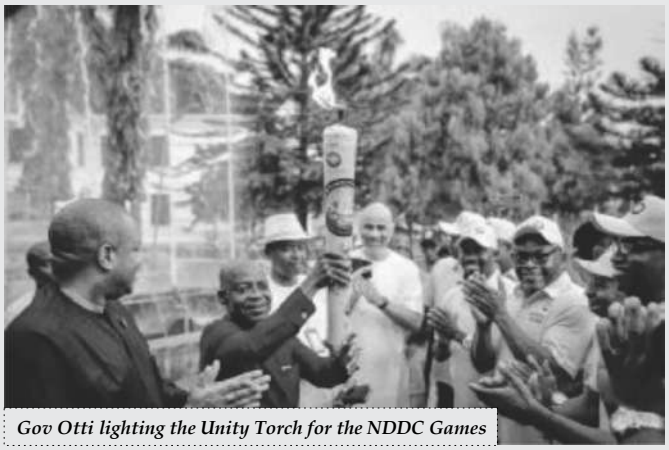
"The hosting of this tennis championship has rekindled tennis in Abia. Tennis previously was not our area of advantage, but we have taken the governor's directives to heart to develop all sports. Abia will continue to lead in sports development in the South East," he said.

He further assured that the second edition of the championship would be hosted next year, stressing that the Abia State Sports Council remained determined to sustain the momentum and not let the governor down.

Among the dignitaries who graced the closing ceremony were the 6 East Zonal Representative of the National Sports Commission, Chief Bernard Ezema; Abia State Director of Sports, Comrade George Obioma; Anambra State Director of Sports, Emeka Obidimma; Ebonyi State Director of Sports, Alep David; and Imo State Director of Sports, Lady Justina Okpulo.



Some of the players with the Ebonyi State Director of Sports



Gov Otti lighting the Unity Torch for the NDDC Games

Rain of Sports Competitions in Abia Under Gov Alex Otti -A New Dawn for Abia Sports

For years, sports development in Abia State was like a farmland suffering from prolonged drought, desperately waiting for the rain. Today, under the visionary leadership of Governor Alex Chioma Otti, OFR, the long-awaited rain has finally come—and it is falling in abundance.

Indeed, it is a rain of sporting competitions.

From the revival of the Abia State School Sports Festival to the Abia State Para-Sports Games, and from zonal competitions to national championships, Abia State is gradually establishing itself as a major hub of sporting activities in the South-East.

The revival of school sports is already yielding impressive results. Several athletes who are today making the state proud were discovered during the maiden Abia State School Sports Festival, before being groomed and nurtured into athletes capable of competing at national and international levels.

Among the emerging talents is Evans Ononikpo, who recently announced himself on the South-East darts scene with an impressive performance at the South-East Darts Championship.

Weightlifting has also produced a crop of promising athletes, including Eze Fidelis, Obinna Bright, Marvelous Obinna, Divine Bernard, Emmanuel Stella and Rejoice Sunday. Under the guidance of dedicated and experienced coaches of the Abia State Sports Council, these young athletes have the potential to develop into national and international champions.

Earlier this year, the Abia State Government inaugurated 35 sports associations, charging them to develop their respective sports, identify promising talents and nurture them to stardom. The impact is already being felt.

The Maiden Abia State South-East Amateur Boxing Championship was held in June, while the Abia State Basketball Association also organised a 3x3 championship, providing athletes with opportunities to compete, gain experience and showcase their abilities.

Beyond the shores of Nigeria, Abia athletes have continued to make their mark.

At the African Para-Badminton Championships in Kampala, Uganda, Abia's Para-Badminton athletes played a significant role in Team Nigeria's outstanding performance, winning 12 of the country's 13 medals.

Abia also hosted the Rainforest Basketball League, further demonstrating the state's growing capacity to attract major sporting competitions.

At the South-East zonal elimination for the U-19 National Intermediate Games, scheduled to take place in Lagos in the first quarter of next year, Team Abia acquitted itself creditably in Owerri.

The state qualified for football—male and female—volleyball—male and female—female beach volleyball, female handball, male hockey and female rugby.

The sporting calendar has also featured competitions in weightlifting, shooting and chess, giving athletes across different disciplines the opportunity to compete and develop their talents.

The recently concluded First Abia South-East Tennis Championship further added colour to the state's growing sporting profile. Apart from providing a platform for athletes to compete, the championship also offered an opportunity to identify promising talents who could go on to represent Abia at national competitions.

And the sporting activities are far from over.

The Tertiary Education Sports Fiesta is set to commence, following the successful tour of tertiary institutions by the Torch of Unity. Each participating institution also received N500,000 to aid its preparations and ensure that the athletes are adequately equipped to compete for honours.

Meanwhile, the Umuahia Township Stadium is undergoing a major renovation as the state prepares to host even more sporting events.

All these developments are not happening by accident. They are part of a deliberate policy direction by Governor Otti, who understands that sports is not merely about competition and entertainment, but also a powerful instrument for youth empowerment, talent development, employment and social transformation.

Through the Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobilor Nwadimma Ananaba, and the Director of Sports, Comrade George Obioma, the administration has continued to provide direction and support for the development of sports across the state.

The result is a renewed sense of hope among athletes and sports stakeholders.

Athletes who were once attracted to other states are gradually returning home. Training facilities are becoming active again, competitions are taking place regularly, and young talents are beginning to see a future for themselves in sports.

From the schools to the sports associations, from the local scene to national and international competitions, the signs are unmistakable.

And just as rain brings life back to a parched farmland, the renewed wave of sporting activities is bringing life, hope and excitement back to Abia sports.

Indeed, Abia sports is green again.

By Stella Ebede
Public Relations Officer,
Abia State Sports Council

Sporting Ambassador

AMBASSADOR With Jacob Joseph

Abia Wins 2nd National Darts Championship

Stories by Joseph Jacob

Team Abia have emerged champions of the second edition of the Abia National Darts Championship, held at the Indoor Sports Hall of the Umuahia Township Stadium.

The host state topped the keenly contested championship with an impressive haul of three gold, three silver and two bronze medals.

Rivers State finished second with two gold, one silver and three bronze medals, while Edo State placed third with two gold and three bronze medals. Oyo State took fourth position with one gold and two bronze medals.

Enugu State finished fifth with two silver and two bronze medals, while Imo State occupied sixth position with two silver medals. Delta State completed the standings in seventh place with two bronze medals.

Abia's duo of Nnamdi Ukaegbu and Evans Ononikpo produced some of the championship's most outstanding performances. Ukaegbu claimed gold in the men's singles, while Ononikpo settled for silver. The pair, however, combined brilliantly to win gold in the men's doubles.

In the mixed doubles, Chinecherem Jacob and Uchechi Brown secured silver, while Brown partnered Chigozie Adigo to win two bronze medals in the women's doubles.

Speaking during the closing ceremony, the Technical Director of the Darts Federation of Nigeria, Christopher Amin, traced the origins of darts to ancient times, when men developed skills associated with self-defence and combat.

Amin noted that although darts was yet to gain widespread popularity in this part of the world, it had become a well-established sport in Europe and America.

According to him, darts offers more than recreation, as it can help take young people off the streets while also improving their academic performance because of the calculations and concentration required in the game.

In his goodwill message, the Chairman of the Abia State Darts Association, Rev. Fr. Dr Emmanuel Okeiyi, congratulated all the participants for their impressive performances, stressing that "sports bring discipline and knowledge."

The Chairman further noted that sports could be as influential as religion in bringing about positive transformation in society.

The President of the Darts Federation of Nigeria, Mr Awolola Adeyemi Isiaka, disclosed that 13 states and clubs participated in the second edition of the championship.

Isiaka expressed optimism that the success recorded in Abia would encourage participation from all 36 states in the country when the third edition is held.

Meanwhile, the ongoing renovation of the Umuahia Township Stadium is expected to be completed by the first quarter of next year.

The cheering news was disclosed by the Abia State Commissioner for Sports and Youth Development, Sir Nwaobilor Nwadimma Ananaba, on the sidelines of the darts championship.

According to the Commissioner, the renovation will include the regrassing of the football pitch and the installation of tartan tracks to facilitate athletics competitions.

Ananaba also assured sports stakeholders that the ongoing renovation would not in any way affect the commencement of work on the proposed International Sports Complex, which, he said, would commence very soon.

Commenting on the recent lacklustre performances of Enyimba International and Abia Warriors in the Nigeria Premier Football League, the Commissioner expressed confidence that both clubs would bounce back and return to reckoning in no distant time.

Highlights of the closing ceremony included the presentation of medals, trophies and cash prizes to the outstanding athletes and teams.



Nnamdi Ukaegbu, the male champion receiving his trophy



Comrade Obioma George

Abia Director of Sports Appointed to Nigeria Padel Federation Board

The Abia State Director of Sports, Comrade George Obioma, has been appointed to the Board of the Nigeria Padel Federation, following its inauguration by the National Sports Commission (NSC) in Abuja.

Obioma was among members of the newly constituted board inaugurated on recently at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja, as the NSC moves to strengthen the administration and development of emerging sporting disciplines in Nigeria.

The board, headed by Rt. Hon. Jimi Benson as President, has been charged with the responsibility of developing padel in Nigeria, expanding grassroots participation, nurturing talents and creating a pathway for Nigerian players to compete at continental and international championships.

The inauguration formed part of the NSC's wider initiative to strengthen sports administration and create opportunities for athletes to excel at national and international levels. The Commission said the new boards must prioritise accountability, effective administration, talent development and the expansion of their respective sports.

For Obioma, the appointment represents another opportunity to contribute his experience in sports administration to the development of a new sporting discipline with growing international appeal.

Padel is a racket sport that combines elements of tennis and squash. It is usually played in doubles on an enclosed court measuring 20 metres by 10 metres, with glass and mesh walls forming part of the playing area. Players use solid, perforated rackets and serve underarm, while the scoring system is similar to that of tennis.

One of the features that makes padel particularly exciting is that the walls remain in play. After the ball bounces, players can use the walls to keep rallies alive, producing fast exchanges and making the sport both competitive and entertaining.

Unlike tennis, the court is considerably smaller, making it easier for players to cover and allowing beginners to enjoy the game relatively quickly. Padel's social and accessible nature has helped drive its rapid expansion across different parts of the world.

Padel originated in Acapulco, Mexico, in 1969, when Mexican businessman and tennis enthusiast Enrique Corcuera created a smaller enclosed court at his home because he did not have enough space for a full-size tennis court.

Today, padel is recognised as one of the fastest-growing racket sports in the world, with its popularity spreading across numerous countries. Its accessibility, relatively simple learning curve and strong social appeal have contributed significantly to its growth.

With the inauguration of the Nigeria Padel Federation Board, the country is positioning itself to take advantage of the sport's rapid international development.

President Jimi Benson has outlined plans to expand the number of players, clubs and courts across Nigeria, while taking the sport beyond its current centres to schools, universities, corporate organisations and communities.

The federation is also expected to develop junior and women's programmes, train coaches and officials, organise national competitions and establish a ranking structure that can provide a pathway for talented players to progress from grassroots participation to national and international representation.

The federation's development agenda could also create opportunities beyond playing the sport, including coaching, club management, sports administration, tournament organisation and other areas of the emerging sports economy.

For Abia State, the appointment of its Director of Sports to the national board provides an opportunity for the state to play a role in the early development of padel in Nigeria and potentially position itself as one of the emerging centres for the sport.

The immediate challenge before the new board is to transform the growing interest in padel into a sustainable national structure capable of identifying and developing talents, building facilities and ultimately producing Nigerian players who can compete successfully on the international stage.

With the sport already enjoying rapid global growth, Nigeria's new padel leadership will be hoping to ensure that the country does not merely watch the game expand from the sidelines but becomes an active participant in its African and global development.

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Discourse

With Chukwuemeka Egejuru

Abia's Transformation Under Otti: Why Sustaining Bold Reforms Matters

Since assuming office on May 29, 2023, Governor Alex Chioma Otti, OFR, has embarked on an ambitious programme of reforms aimed at repositioning Abia State, rebuilding critical infrastructure, strengthening public institutions and improving residents' quality of life.

Anchored on accountability, institutional restructuring, infrastructure renewal and economic transformation, the Otti administration has introduced interventions across roads, healthcare, education, transportation, power, digital innovation, youth empowerment and public financial management.

As the state approaches the 2027 general elections, it is important to examine these initiatives, their impact and the need to sustain policies capable of delivering lasting benefits.

One of the most visible achievements of the administration has been its road infrastructure programme. Recognising the importance of good roads to commerce, agriculture, transportation and industrial growth, the government has prioritised road construction and rehabilitation across the state.

At its third anniversary in May 2026, the administration reported completing 414 road projects covering approximately 864 kilometres, while another 82 projects spanning about 212 kilometres were under construction.

Notable projects include Port Harcourt Road and Ohanku Road in Aba, Omenuko Bridge and the Umuahia–Uzuakoli–Abariba–Ohafia corridor.

These interventions are expected to improve connectivity, facilitate the movement of goods and services, reduce transportation difficulties and stimulate commercial activities.

For a state whose economy depends significantly on entrepreneurship, manufacturing and small businesses, functional road infrastructure is indispensable. Sustaining these investments will require quality construction, effective drainage and regular maintenance.

The administration has also prioritised rebuilding the state's healthcare delivery system through infrastructure rehabilitation, personnel recruitment and improved access to medical services.

A major intervention is Project Ekwueme, designed to rehabilitate and equip 200 primary healthcare facilities across the state's 184 wards. The government has also reported retrofitting 277 primary healthcare centres, including facilities supported through World Bank-assisted programmes, alongside recruiting healthcare professionals.

Investments in general hospitals, specialist medical facilities and health insurance initiatives further demonstrate the government's commitment to strengthening healthcare delivery.

The next priority should be ensuring that these facilities have qualified personnel, essential medicines, functional equipment, electricity, potable water and adequate funding.

Education has equally received attention. The introduction of free and compulsory basic education seeks to remove financial barriers and expand access to schooling.

In 2025, the government reported recruiting 5,394 teachers to address manpower shortages in public schools. This investment must be complemented by adequate classrooms, instructional materials, teacher development, sanitation and improved learning environments.

Ultimately, educational success should be measured by the quality of learning and the knowledge and skills acquired by pupils.

The Abia Green Shuttle electric-bus initiative represents an effort to modernise public transportation and provide residents with more organised mobility options.



Governor Alex Otti

The introduction of electric buses, shelters and terminals has the potential to improve urban transportation while supporting cleaner mobility.

Environmental sanitation, streetlighting and urban renewal have also featured in the administration's development agenda.

Similarly, the Aba master plan developed in collaboration with UN-Habitat and the digitisation of millions of land records represent important steps towards modernising land administration, reducing disputes, improving property documentation and strengthening investor confidence.

Reliable electricity remains essential for industrial growth and business development. The administration's power-sector initiatives therefore seek to improve electricity supply, particularly for commercial establishments, industrial clusters and small businesses.

Equally significant is its investment in technology and youth empowerment through the Abia TechRise Digital Skills Development Programme.

Implemented through a partnership involving the state government, the 17 local government councils and Learn Factory Nigeria, TechRise is designed to equip young Abians with practical digital competencies and prepare them for opportunities in the global technology industry.

Since its commencement in February 2025, the programme has completed three cohorts, training 2,210 participants. The first cohort graduated 510 participants in May 2025, while the second and third cohorts trained 850 participants each, graduating in December 2025 and August 2026 respectively.

Training areas include software development, mobile application development, data engineering, cyber security, artificial intelligence, digital arts and animation.

Beyond skills acquisition, the administration has connected the initiative with employment and financial support. Governor Otti approved automatic employment into the Abia State Civil Service for 19 outstanding graduates from the first cohort, 50 from the second and another 19 from the third cohort.

At the third cohort's graduation in August 2026, he also announced a □100,000 support grant for each of the 850 graduates and allowed them to retain their training laptops.

Another notable initiative is the ThriveAbia Digital Capacity Development and Mentorship Programme. Following a pilot training of 100 participants, which recorded an 87 per cent graduation rate, the Governor approved its expansion to accommodate 1,000 young people.

Implemented in partnership with Tech Excentric, the programme focuses on digital skills, entrepreneurship and mentorship.

The administration's collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme through the UNIPOD initiative also demonstrates its interest in promoting innovation and technology-driven entrepreneurship.

These initiatives deserve sustained investment. Their success should be measured not only by participants trained but also by jobs secured, businesses established, innovations developed and improvements in beneficiaries' economic circumstances.

Beyond physical infrastructure, the Otti administration has promoted reforms in public financial management, debt administration and budget transparency.

Sustainable development requires prudent resource management, responsible borrowing, transparent procurement and effective monitoring of public expenditure.

Government must therefore continue strengthening institutions, improving revenue generation and ensuring that public resources produce measurable benefits for residents.

As Abia approaches the 2027 general elections, the sustainability of ongoing development initiatives deserves serious public attention.

Roads under construction must be completed and maintained. Rehabilitated hospitals must remain functional, schools adequately equipped, and power and transportation initiatives must deliver tangible benefits. Digital empowerment programmes must also continue creating opportunities for young people.

Development should not be reduced to political competition or abandoned because of changes in government. Projects and policies that serve the public interest deserve to be strengthened and sustained.

Governor Otti's reform agenda provides an opportunity to consolidate ongoing investments, deepen institutional restructuring and address developmental challenges that have persisted over the years.

Nevertheless, continuity must go hand in hand with accountability. The government should maintain transparency, provide regular project updates, disclose relevant expenditure information and remain responsive to constructive criticism. Citizens, civil society organisations and the media also have responsibilities to monitor projects and demand results.

As voters prepare for 2027, Abians should assess the administration's record, evaluate its commitments and consider the implications of continuity or change for the state's future.

Where performance meets public expectations, supporting the continuation of the administration's development agenda through democratic participation and the ballot box becomes a legitimate consideration.

Governor Alex Chioma Otti's administration has initiated reforms across several critical sectors. Their long-term impact will depend on effective implementation, institutional stability and sustained commitment.

The ultimate objective should be an Abia where good roads support businesses, hospitals provide dependable healthcare, schools produce competent graduates, electricity powers industries, digital skills create employment and public institutions serve citizens efficiently.

Abia needs development that transcends personalities and electoral cycles. It needs enduring policies, functional institutions and accountable leadership.

As 2027 approaches, residents should remain engaged in the conversation about governance, continuity and development, making informed decisions based on verifiable performance and the collective aspirations of the state.

The progress of Abia must remain everyone's responsibility. What works should be sustained, what falls short corrected, and every public investment made to serve the people.

The future of Abia must be defined not simply by who occupies the seat of power, but by the quality, consistency and sustainability of governance delivered to its citizens.

The progress of Abia must remain everyone's responsibility. What works should be sustained, what falls short corrected, and every public investment made to serve the people.

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