



Government shouldn't be dumping ground for mediocrities, Abia youth leader tells Otti, reels out expectations PG 5



How Abia State IGR Grew From N15.9bn In 2020 To N20.1bn In 2022 PG 26



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DR. ALEX OTTI OFR
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE

Hurray

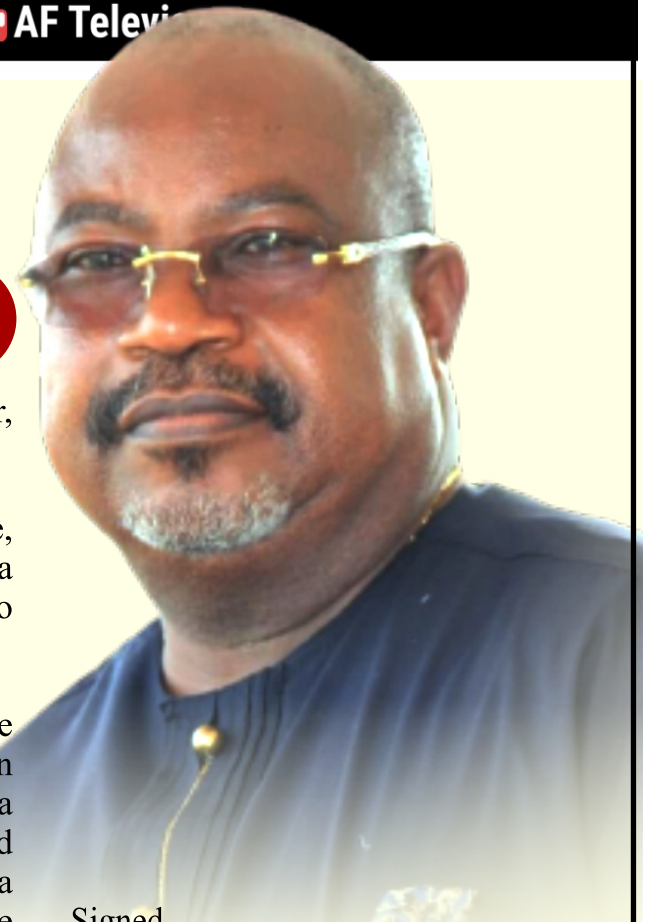
A New Abia State Dawns!!

Felicitations To Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, Governor, Abia State Nigeria.

24 years after, the journey begins afresh for Abia State, the God's Own State: the old dark epoch gives way to a new era of light. And so, with heart full of gratitude to the Almighty.

We rejoice in the coming of a clean vessel to serve as the Light House for the governance of our dear state. It is in this frame of mind that I, Chief (Dr.) David Ogba Onuoha-Bourdex, on behalf of my family, friends and associates, felicitate with the new Governor of Abia State, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, as he mounts the saddle with his inauguration into office today, May 29, 2023.

Being also my birthday anniversary, it is indeed double celebration and sign of good things for our beloved state!!



Signed
Chief Dr. David Ogba Onuoha
Bourdex MFR, OON
Ugo'Ena" Nde Abiriba

Otti will meet 70% of Abians' expectations only if he's a magician – says Abia Speaker, speaks on purported impeachment



Rt. Hon. Chinedum Orji

Called 'Ikuku' which means 'the breeze' by his admirers and supporters, the Speaker of the Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Chinedum Orji does not need any introduction especially with the recent impeachment saga that beclouded his leadership of the assembly on the heels of his failure to secure his desired move to the green chambers at the National Assembly. The

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Why I Was Very Sure Labour Party Would Take Over Abia State Govt. From PDP – Igara

Page 22

Omrade Ceekay Igara is the Chairman of Labour Party in Abia State and

doubles as the chairman of the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), in the state. In this interview with Our



I'm happy Labour Party, Alex Otti dismantled a 24-year-old dynasty in Abia – Nwangwa, alleges how Ikpeazu humiliated Ngwa elites

Some Electioneering Campaign Promises By Dr Alex Otti, 5th Democratically Elected Governor Of Abia State

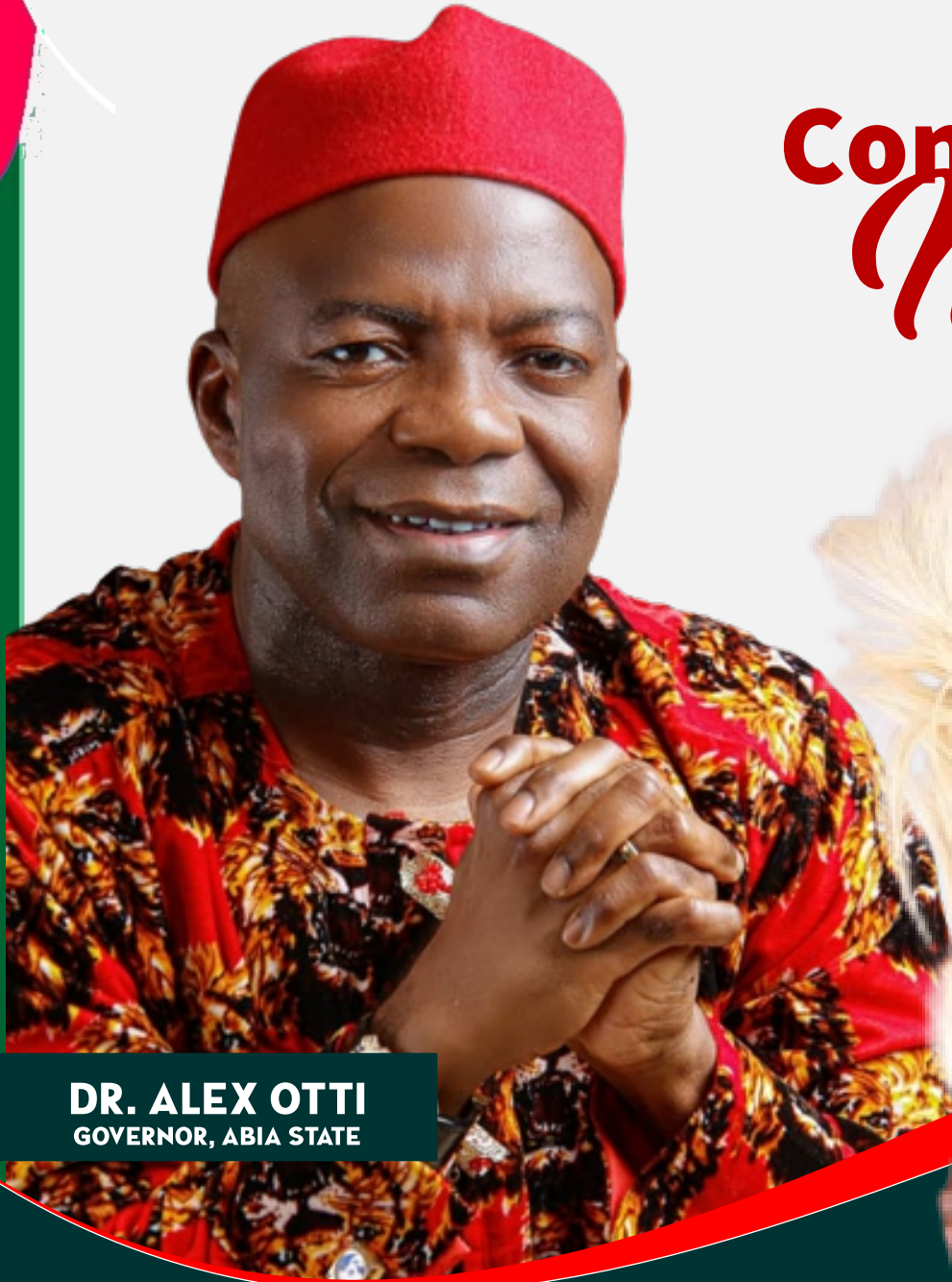
PG 3



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Congratulatory Message



DR. ALEX OTTI
GOVERNOR, ABI STATE



As you get sworn in today as Abia State 5th democratically elected governor, we are sure that with your pedigree the state will be piloted in the right direction despite the huge challenges before you. Mainland Oil/Gas Limited and Chrisnak Group of Companies are fully ready to team up with you in your industrialization drive.

HAPPY INAUGURATION

Signed
Chief Dr. Chris Odinaka Igwe OFR
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

DR. ALEX OTTI OFR
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE

ENGR IKECHUKWU EMETU
DEPUTY GOVERNOR ABIA STATE

Some Electioneering Campaign Promises By Dr Alex Otti, 5th Democratically Elected Governor Of Abia State

Some Electioneering Campaign Promises By Dr Alex Otti, 4th Democratically Elected Governor Of Abia State

- Only persons with proven career history and records of professional and career accomplishment are appointed to serve in his administration.
- All appointees and senior government officials including the governor would publicly declare their assets regularly, for public scrutiny.
- To reconstruct the long abandoned Port-Harcourt road, Aba and others.
- To remodel all government approved motor parks.
- To complete works at the permanent site of the Abia State Government House.
- Ensure that all government officials will sign a Service Level Agreement (SLA) that clearly outlines his stewardship to the citizens.
- To carry out a periodic performance review to ensure that optimum service levels are consistently delivered to the public.
- To transform the process of governance by reforming the public service structure.
- To help public servants acquire relevant technology-based skills that would make them more productive and efficient.
- Access existing processes to see possible areas to eliminate waste and corruption.
- Run a full e-compliant administration for the first three years.
- Transit land administration from the current manual processes to a digital process that will ensure completion of land title transfer within five working days.
- Work with the legislature to amend the fiscal responsibility act to make it more responsive, transparent, and easier to administer.
- Partner with local trade unions, chambers of commerce, industry and agriculture, community development associations and town unions to create a suitable framework to drive Abia's integrated economic development framework.
- Re-engineer all MDAs and institutions connected with the economic and infrastructural development of Abia, to become fit-for-purpose and more responsive to emerging needs.
- Partnership with neighbouring states in areas of mutual economic interests, such as agriculture, infrastructural development, and security.
- Eliminate all forms of illegal taxation and levies. Introduce e-based process of tax and levy administrations that will ensure that tax proceeds are domiciled in the state treasury.
- A periodic publication of the state's audited account to strengthen accountability and for public assessment.
- To run a transparent and open government.
- Build need-oriented infrastructure development in the communities.
- Build economic projects with multiplier effects on employment generation, wealth creation.
- Utilisation of local raw materials in various parts of the state for revenue generation.
- Restore the financial autonomy of Local Government Areas in the state.
- Construct a functional light rail system to connect the 17 LGAs for easy movement of goods and agricultural products.
- Cut the cost of governance.
- Support the private sector to create jobs.
- Revive the night life in Abia to boost the economy.
- Pay all outstanding salaries and pensions 6 months into office.
- Pay retirees their pensions and entitlements as and when due.

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UNITED ABIA ARTISTES AND PATRIOTS (UAAP)

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE



We, the United Abia Artistes and Patriots (UAAP), wish to join all well-meaning Abians and friends of Abia the world over to felicitate with Your Excellency, Dr. Alex Otti, OFR on the historic occasion of your Inauguration as 5th elected governor of Abia State.

We are particularly excited that your resounding victory at the poll has already ushered in a refreshing atmosphere of peace, hope and faith across the length and breadth of God's Own State.

We do fervently pray that the Almighty God who watches over the City of Jerusalem will, through Your Excellency's administration, rebuild Abia and restore the state to her path of destiny.

Congratulations!

Signed,

- Dr. Sir Mike Mbama Okiro
- Chief Umeh Kalu (SAN)
- High Chief Raymond Nkemdirim- Patron and CEO, Flo Fm
- 1. Amb. Dr. Osita Ofor- Ultimate Commander (Convener)
- 2. Capt. Paul Nwachukwu
- 3. Michael Ugochukwu Ruggedman- (Coordinator)
- 4. Emma Ehumadu Labista - (Coordinator)
- 5. Barr. Chuks Akamadu, M. loD (Secretary/Legal Adviser)
- 6. Ejike Collins - Nollywood Legend
- 7. Buchi Atuonwu Enyioma- Music Legend
- 8. Gloria Nobert Young- Nollywood Legend
- 9. Legendary Chief John Obuh- World-Class Football Coach
- 10. Rev. Chinyere Unachukwu
- 11. Joyce Kalu- Nollywood Legend
- 12. Chaka Chukwumerije - Stakeholder
- 13. Hope Obioma Opara- Founder, Eko Film Festival/Media Guru
- 14. Emeka Enyiocha- Nollywood Legend
- 15. Andy Shurman- Music Legend

- 16. Chief Chris Ifesi- Stakeholder
- 17. Iroegbu Emenike - Publisher, All Facts Newspapers
- 18. Mazi Dr. Sam Uche Anyamele- Nollywood Stakeholder
- 19. Hon. Barr. Favour Nzeanochie- Legal Adviser, Abians in Diaspora
- 20. Mr Alozie Uzoukwu- Veteran Broadcaster
- 21. Chinyere Nwabueze- Nat'l President Women in Nollywood Development
- 22. Geraldine Chika Obi -Ex Miss Abia and Nollywood Star
- 23. Hon. Ralph Nwafor Secretary General, NWBC
- 24. Hon. Kingsley Oriaku- Stakeholder
- 25. Emeka Enyioma- Nollywood Legend
- 26. Mazi Clement Okoro Inyama- Stakeholder
- 27. Chief Christopher- Maduka, Stakeholder
- 28. Barr. Kingsley Chimezie Okorie (SAN)
- 29. Christian Okpara- Veteran Journalist
- 30. Ebele Young- Stakeholder
- 31. Tony Ubani- Veteran Sports Journalist

Government shouldn't be dumping ground for mediocrities, Abia youth leader tells Otti, reels out expectations



Kingsley Ekejiuba



Dr. Alex Otti

Government shouldn't be dumping ground for mediocrities, Abia youth leader tells Otti, reels out expectations

By Faith Ukanwa

As Abia State gears up to experiencing a new administration to manage its affairs, there is the need for a total departure from the norms that characterised the previous administrations in the state where individuals many considered as mediocrities were policymakers. For Comrade Daberechi Kingsley Ekejiuba, the President-General, Progressive Abia Youths (P.A.Y.), this should no longer be the case in the administration of Dr Alex Otti, as he outlines expectations for the incoming governor. Ekejiuba spoke in an exclusive interview with Faith Ukanwa.

Tell us about P.A.Y. and its role in the 2023 general elections, especially in Abia State.

Progressive Abia Youths as it's called is a non-governmental organisation that is run by the brightest minds in the state. We saw the need to participate in the process because it's in line with our mission and vision which is to make Abia State the most beautiful state in Nigeria and that cannot happen if we don't participate in the process of realising that vision. Our mission involves development of programmes and designing policies and partnering with relevant government authorities to design youth-centred policies that would ensure a progressive society. With that understanding, we started this awareness programme—calling on

the young people to participate in the election process because we have been able to discover that as a democratic nation, the most vital means of instituting democratic change is through the ballot. The ballot is the greatest weapon in the hands of every citizen against misgovernance, and because of that, we had to mobilize the youths of Abia in their numbers. Some other organisations saw our direction and that we represent that youth movement that is non-partisan but well-grounded and has a very clear mission. These organisations came in the likes of African Primary Health Foundation, Organisation for Reform and Impact, 100 Igbos Incorporated, Ready to Lead AFRICA; and came together to drive this initiative. We started formulating the project 'Voters Registration Exercise' tagged "*Sorom Tuo*" an Igbo phrase that literally means '*Vote with me*'. The concept was designed as a call to action for everybody to come out and vote. We mobilized about 170 young people, going to communities in all the Local Government Areas of Abia State telling people to come out and vote with us and this happened for a period of 90 days –from February to May 2022. We also had some of these organisations coming to provide incentives in form of medical outreach so that when people come to register, they get their blood pressure and blood sugar levels checked and then get professional advice. We believe that if we all come out to play a role and participate in the process, we should be able to engineer an election in Abia that would be free, fair and credible and will be a true reflection of the will of Abia people. That was the

message we were sending across. That effort yielded tremendous results. In the course of that 90-day intervention programme in partnership with INEC, we were able to register about 74, 299 new voters in Abia State. The total number of registered voters in the state according to INEC's data was over one hundred and thirty thousand, and that shows that through our intervention we were able to capture more than 60% of the total number of registered voters in Abia in the course of the last registration phase.

We also went on to partner with INEC to ensure that these people get their PVCs and we started PVC distribution and voter education programme using the same model that we used in engaging the young people . We distributed about 150,000 old and new PVCs in Abia alone.

All of this was geared towards activating the office of the citizens to make Abians understand the powers they have; the power of the Permanent Voters Card and the power of a single

vote.

How would you assess the 2023 general elections in abia state?

I am proud to say that Abia State had the best election in the whole of the federation citing the fact that for the first time since Abia was created, the votes of Abians counted and INEC can have a pat on their back for doing a very good job in Abia. Despite the issues of logistics during the presidential election, the outcome of the presidential election also reflected the will of the people of Abia state same with the National Assembly election. It was a very wonderful exercise. For me, the election conducted by INEC in Abia State on 25th of February, and 18th of March 2023 remains the best election that has ever been conducted in this state. It was absolutely free and fair. You could see from the jubilation on the street and how people went on to celebrate the work that INEC did here.

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CONGRATULATION
His Excellency

The battle to liberate Abia State has come a long way, but you have remained consistent, focus and resolute.

Because of your consistency, your wealth of experience, your believe that a new Abia is possible, Abians came out in their numbers to vote for you as Governor.

Ndi Abia believe that God's Own State will be safe in your hands, the people believe that you can rewrite the story of the state.

As you embark on this journey today, OHIRI HOME DESIGNERS LTD is ready to partner with you and bring about the new Abia State.

God bless you, His Excellency, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti OFR

OHIRI O LEWIS
NG 1 Designer

DR. ALEX OTTI
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE



DR. ALEX OTTI OFR & **ENGR. IKECHUKWU EMETU**
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE DEPUTY GOVERNOR ABIA STATE

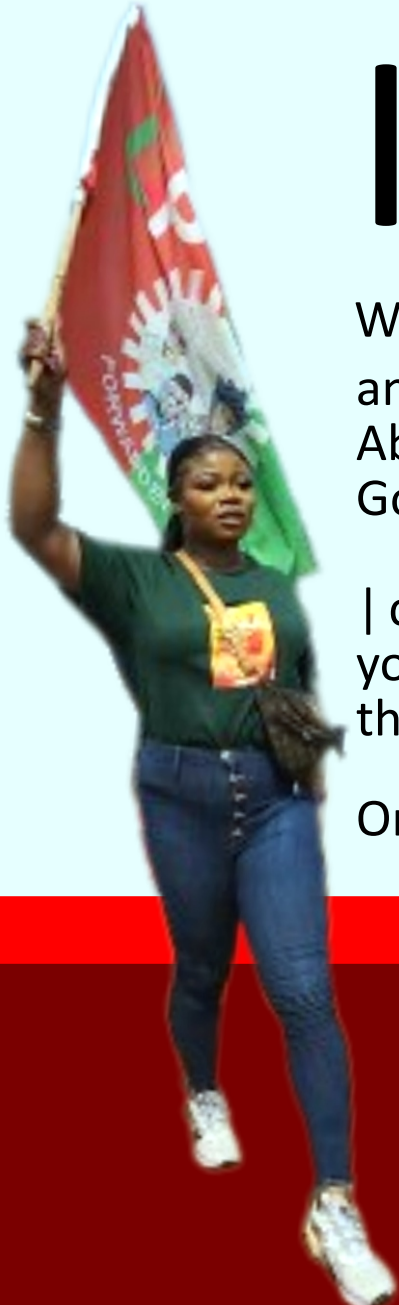
Congratulations!

In every contest, a winner must always emerge. I'm super elated that on Saturday March 18, 2023, Abians trooped out to convert their support into votes for Dr Alex Otti OFR.

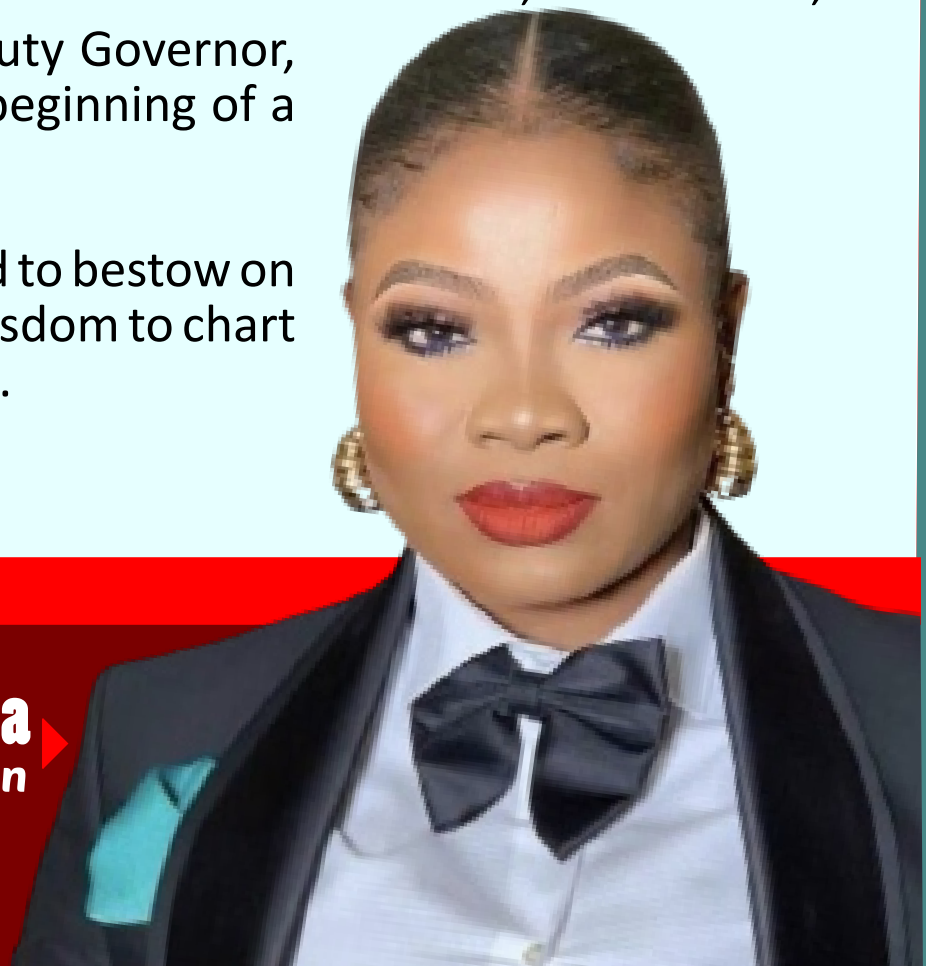
Without mincing words, the emergence of Dr Alex Otti OFR, as Governor, and Engr. Ikechukwu Emetu as Deputy Governor, Abia State, is one that heralds the beginning of a Golden Era in our statehood journey.

I congratulate you and I pray for God to bestow on you and your deputy the requisite wisdom to chart the Abia dream to an enviable height.

Once again, congratulations sir!



Miss Lilian Ujunwa
CEO Food Captain



Some Electioneering Campaign Promises By Dr Alex Otti, 5th Democratically Elected Governor Of Abia State

from page 3

- Create a ministry of Aba to design, implement and provide key enablement for the economic rejuvenation of Aba as an economic hub.
- Provide holistic infrastructural development in Aba to create a model city that supports businesses, family life and leisure activities.
- Incubate 1000 new SMEs within the Aba industrial corridor annually.
- Establish technical skills development programs to further empower entrepreneurs in Aba especially in the areas of automation, use of technology to improve quality and productivity.
- To seek and encourage innovative investors.
- Upgrade existing markets and their support infrastructure and also support them with facilities such as; fire service, waste disposal systems, security cameras, rest rooms, medical centres, etc.
- Recall illegally sacked workers.
- Reform Enyimba football club.
- Create a fund scheme; "Labour Party Cooperative Society" for business people, artisans, farmers and apprentices in the state to help them with either capital to start a business or support their already existing businesses to ensure that they are financially independent.
- Provide the necessary infrastructure that will enable the judiciary to leverage on technology in dispensing timely justice to the people.
- Decongest the courts by supporting the judiciary in harnessing the opportunities for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Conduct LGA elections as and when due, offering the people an opportunity to elect their choicest candidate.
- Work with LGAs to access opportunities and grants from multilateral agencies concerned with development.
- Partner with LGAs to increase internet penetration in the communities.
- Restructure the operational framework at the Abia State Independent Electoral Commission (ABSIEC) to transform into a truly Independent organisation capable of conducting free fair credible and transparent elections at the LGAs.
- Establish welfare programmes for the elderly and the extremely poor.
- Use counterpart funding to encourage community participation in development projects.
- Introduce community sports and cultural festivals as a way of reinventing our culture and boosting tourism.
- Partner with Internet Service Providers, telecommunication companies and others to expand their facilities to communities so that youths can leverage on the high speed internet and robust telephone services to drive their businesses right from their communities.
- Collaborate with Electricity Distribution Companies and the gas programme of the Federal government to improve power supply.
- Work with the private sector to support gas processing in the Ukwia oil and gas belt for energy supply.
- Introduce use of technology to regulate and monitor activities of miners.
- Establish a technology institute with world class equipment, resources and ambience with the capacity to train about 10,000 youths annually.
- Build a world class film village close to Nsulu Games village in Isiala-Ngwa North LGA.
- Provide free education for Abia residents from primary to junior secondary school.
- provide support for students from vulnerable backgrounds
- Create Abia health Insurance Scheme.
- Restructure and fully fund the Abia State Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA).
- Ensure the clearing of all blocked drainages in Aba and Umuhia to reduce flooding.

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ALEX CHIOMA OTTI: THE MAN OF THE MOMENT



The man, Alex Chioma Otti is a Nigerian economist, banker, investor, philanthropist and politician, but currently the Governor-elect of Abia State of Nigeria.

He was born on February 18th 1965, to the family of the late Pastor and Mrs. Lazarus Weze Otti at Umuru, Umuehim village in Ehi Na Uguru Ancient Kingdom, Isiala Ngwa South LGA of Abia State.

He had his secondary school education at Ngwa High School, Aba and Secondary Technical School, Okpuala Ngwa in Abia State, where he finished as the best student in his set during the school certificate examinations. He thereafter proceeded to the University of Port Harcourt for his university education, where he graduated with a First Class honors degree in economics in 1988. Otti earned an MBA degree from the University of Lagos in 1994 and attended various international courses including the Executive Development Programmes of the Columbia Business and Stanford Business School and Wharton Business School (University of Pennsylvania). He also did an executive programme at INSEAD, Fontainebleau, France, and held several other positions before becoming the Group Managing Director of Diamond Bank Plc, a retail financial institution in Nigeria.

He was a gubernatorial candidate in Abia State on the platform of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). On December 31, 2015, the Court of Appeal which sat in Owerri removed Okezie Ikpeazu of the Peoples' Democratic Party, PDP, as governor of Abia State and declared him the winner of the April 11 and April 25 Governorship elections in the state.

On February 3, 2016, the Supreme Court of Nigeria reversed the verdict and affirmed the election of Okezie Ikpeazu as Governor of Abia state.

As a member of the Editorial Board of Thisday Newspaper, Otti writes a fortnight column every other Monday, which he titles "Outside The Box".

He is from Isiala-Ngwa North LGA, and has emerged as the Abia state governor-elect following the March 18, 2023 elections.

Today, May 29, 2023, people from all walks of life have converged at this venue, to witness the inauguration of a man whose hunger to serve the people of Abia at the topmost position cannot be equated to any other.

As we, in All Facts Newspapers join millions of people across the globe to wish him well in his endeavour to deliver dividends of democracy to his people we call on all Abians to join hands with Otti as the Captain of our ship to build an Abia of our dreams.



DR. ALEX OTTI
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE



CHIEF AMOBI OGAH
Member Representing
Isuikwuato / Umunneochi Federal Constituency

Congratulatory Message

Your excellency, your battle to turnaround the fortunes of Abia State started in 2015, in 2019 you remained in the trenches and in 2023 which is God's appointed time your desire came to pass.

The people of Abia State voted you deliberately because they believe in your vision for the State and also believe that you have all it takes to change the narrative.

As you take up the mantle of leadership today, always remember that you hold the trust of the people and let all your activities be for the interest of Abians.

I have worked closely with you in recent time and I have no doubt that you will deliver in this mandate.

God Bless Abia State
God Bless Dr. Alex Otti OFR



UMUASUA PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION INC.

Udo na Oganihu

Umuasua Autonomous Community, Opp. Isuikwuato L.G.A Secretariat, Mbalano
P.O. Box 23, Ovim, Isuikwuato, Abia State

GOODWILL MESSAGE FROM THE U.P.A INC, ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF UMUASUA AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY, ISUIKWUATO LGA, TO H.E. DR. ALEX CHIOMA OTTI AT THE OCCASION OF HIS INAUGURATION AS THE 5TH EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF ABIA STATE OF NIGERIA.

It is a huge profound joy for us as a people to be alive and to witness this grand occasion of your swearing in ceremony as the 5th democratically elected governor of Abia State.

It is worthy of note to point out that not only had your election and today's swearing in been long expected by the long impoverished and debased good people of Abia State as a saving grace, it has also been in the plan and purpose of God Almighty that you would, at this point in time, be a tool in His saving hands in the mold of Moses to the Israelites.

As a people and part and parcel of Abians who had suffered untold socio-economic deprivations and unsolicited psychological battering in the last two and half decades, our collective expectations are undoubtedly and expectedly very high and traverse the entire socio-economic, politico-cultural, and environmental gamut.

Yet, we are very much jubilant and upbeat knowing that "ohia nyere nwa nta ji ga enyekwa ya nku e ji ahu ya" (the farm that avails a child a piece of yam shall also provide him the firewood to roast it).

Abia is God's own State. Dr. Alex Otti is God's own chosen Abia human tool to lead Abia State to her Promised Land. Therefore, we pray that God in His infinite mercies, look down from His throne of grace and imbue you with all necessary tools – charity, grace, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, power, good health, etc – to deliver on the obviously herculean State-wide tasks.

Finally, we are humbled to be associated with you and glad to hereby pledge our unalloyed support at all times.

Thank you and God bless you.



DR. ALEX OTTI OFR & **ENGR. IKECHUKWU EMETU**
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE DEPUTY GOVERNOR ABIA STATE

Emenike J. Iroegbu
(General Secretary)

Ozoemenam N. Igbokwe
(President-General)

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N'noko ndi Isuikwuato

Goodwill & Congratulatory Message

It is the pleasure and delight of N'noko ndi Isuikwuato to felicitate with the 5th Executive Governor of Abia State, His Excellency, Dr Alex Otti as you are inaugurated to pilot the affairs of our dear God's own state.

As you are prepared to take up the responsibilities and burdens of the number one office, we ndi N'noko Isuikwuato and the entire Isuikwuato people pray for strength, wisdom and good health disposition to exceed expectations of all, as your administration and leadership bring about great democratic and socio-economic benefits to the people.

We further pray for a harmonious working relationship with the member

representing Isuikwuato state constituency for the upliftment of our people and state.

Congratulations!

Sign:

Afulike Don Christian
Iheme Nwabueze
Emmanuel Iheanacho
Aguocha Onyekachi
Barr Emmanuel Okoroji
Engr. Nwachukwu Christopher (Ph.D)
Emenike Iroegbu
Ukandu Kelechi Kingsley
Kanu Ohuabunwa Henry
Adibe Mmecha

As at April 2023, Abia State has about N40 billion outstanding wage bills of workers & pensioners – Oriaku

Emenike Iroegbu

Obinna Oriaku is a former commissioner for finance in Abia State, in this interview with Emenike Iroegbu, he gives insight on the state of things in the state, especially in the area of finance and government indebtedness. Let's meet him.

How would you evaluate Abia State's financial status as of now? Healthy or not?

Abia State financial situation is in a mess and this is not far from the financial decisions taken by the state, though most states of the federation are also in financial mess.

Considering your experience as Commissioner for Finance, do we have a finance inflow problem or management issues?

We have both issues mentioned above. The inflow you referred above could be called revenue which includes the federal allocation and internally generated revenue. We have problem of growing our IGR due to many issues but principal amongst them is leadership. Abia State has potentials of generating about N3b monthly conservatively; the management angle is another major problem. Cost of governance is very high. If you go to our financials in 2020, about N1.7b was spent on ticketing and travels which averages about N150m monthly.

Comparatively, in same 2020, Ebonyi state spent only N135m on ticketing and travels. You don't need to go far to know why Ebonyi State did well during the period under review. Leadership is also key in financial management hence they say that "fish rots from the head." These can be likened to controllable expense in accounting.

As a Finance Chief of the state during your tenure, what measures did you apply to help resolve Abia State financial issues?

We were greeted with the first recession and Okonjo Iweala even warned about the economic outlook of the then outgoing government; Abia got an all-time low of N1.8b in the month of September 2016 as FAAC and JAAC of N1.6b, it was a very turbulent period. We introduced a lot of reforms geared towards repositioning the state. These reforms include: Civil service reform. Judiciary reform, Parastatals reforms (Health Management Board, Abia State Polytechnic, Aba, Abia State University Teaching Hospital, Aba, Abia State College of Education

Technical, Arochukwu, School of Health Aba, Abia State University, Uturu etc.) – Salary and pension reform, Local Government reform and IGR reform amongst others. Many of these reform documents are still in the shelves unimplemented.

However, on assumption, I started by practicing what we preached then which was "sacrificial leadership" we reduced the cost of most overhead though most people never loved us for such decisions. We reduced overhead to Secretary to the office of State Government (SSG) from N14m to N7m, Exco allowance for Commissioners from N1million down to N500,000. We reduced what was being paid to Local Government Service Commission from about 20m to N6m etc. I personally reduced the cost of going to Abuja for FAAC meeting from N1.6 million down to N500,000 though it was jacked back to N1.6m when I left office. Maybe I was most stupid from what I later discovered.

We made savings in automation and centralisation of salary payment for the MDAs. Parastatals as HMB, BCA, and ABSUTH were included in the centralized payment model for proper management. This brought savings of over N300 Million monthly from what was the general wage bill before Okezie's administration. We also centralized and automated the pension payment system and closed the 19 sub-treasuries that served as conduit for fraud on payment of pensioners which was manually done as they were paid cash prior to June 2015.

All these hard decisions assisted the young administration in solving most of the problems we met but not without a push back. The bailout assisted too as the application was adjudged among the best in the federation. The state won award from Governor's forum on this project.

That is why first tenure of Dr Okezie administration 2015 / 2019 is referred as the glorious era of his entire administration especially when Late Chijioke Nwakodo was around.

Can you estimate how much Abia State Government owes workers?

The last gratuity of N100 Million was paid while I was serving as Commissioner and the last set of retirees that have been paid gratuity are those that left service in 2003. We have about N46 Billion outstanding in gratuity as of September 2022; I'm sure it has further increased since workers retire almost every month. We still need to investigate the claims as some of the gratuity documents were being recycled by some civil servants.



Obinna Oriaku

The outstanding wage bill of workers and pensions as of April 2023 is about N40 billion. These figures are scary but like Okonjo Iweala said "I don't envy anybody entering government now" and it's very challenging and demanding.

It has been done in other locations and can also be done here in Abia. What is required is focus and leadership. Like I said, these figures must be investigated as most civil servants have travelled outside the country. The government will start with those here and are willing to work while those outside the country or that changed jobs will also be paid with another arrangement.

How do you think this new government can resolve this unpaid wage bill brouhaha?

The outstanding wage issue is very challenging. Dr Alex Otti said he is determined to clear the backlog of salaries and pensions; a lot will be deployed to achieve this. The administration will deploy cost cutting measures in all spheres, the pension and wage bill data will also need to be reviewed, the IGR must be overhauled immediately and the government must engage the workers in transparent manner. I am convinced that workers will appreciate any effort geared towards clearing the arrears of salaries and pension

The government will demonstrate that ability, and I don't have any doubt about Dr Alex's ability to cut off those frivolities and unnecessary cost that have defined successive administrations. The major expense head used to be Government House overhead and I believe he has seen it all before coming to governance. Dr Alex Otti can effectively work on cost reduction being former MD of a bank; he knows what and how to go about it.

How can Abia State Government increase her IGR?

The IGR can be improved by developing the political will to restructure the Board of Internal Revenue like other states have done. We have many who don't understand what the times are and they are still with that agency. The IGR of the state can never be used as political patronage for the boys, every 1 Naira counts. Abians are not usually willing to pay tax but with the re-orientation agency fully engaged in changing the mind set of our people about government business, I'm sure we will see growth in that area but a lot needs to be done.

Mass mobilization of the critical mass of the informal sector and automation are key today in the industry and current automation should be reviewed for effectiveness and efficiency.

Which of the reforms do you cherish most, especially as you left government in 2019 and did not see through most of these reforms you highlighted?

Disarticulation of JSS 1 to 3 from Abia State Government and handing them back to the local government administration.

As Commissioner for finance payment of teachers was a huge problem considering our receipt as allocation that period. We needed about N490m to pay teachers in a month during that time.

I later discovered that Abia State did not domesticate the UBEC Act fully as Abia State local governments were supposed to administer and manage the JSS 1 to 3 as done by other states of the federation.

A committee headed by the current chairman of ASUBEB reviewed the process that saw to the transfer of management and teachers of JSS 1 to 3 back to the Abia State local government system.

This resulted in the transfer of wage bill of JSS 1 to 3 teachers amounting to about N280m back to the local government management system. I get excited when I hear how primary school teachers and those in JSS 1 to 3 are being paid regularly compared to their secondary school counterpart; SSS1 to SSS3 after the reform implementation. These are the benefits of reforms as it provides solutions to some of the hydra headed problems of most institutions in the state.

I'm happy Labour Party, Alex Otti dismantled a 24-year-old dynasty in Abia – Nwangwa, alleges how Ikpeazu humiliated Ngwa elites

Emenike Iroegbu

Mr Lawrence Charles Nwangwa is an industrialist of the Ngwa stock and hails from Obingwa, the same local government with the outgoing Governor of Abia State, Dr Okezie Ikpeazu. He tells Emenike Iroegbu in this interview, how happy he is with the outcome of the last governorship election in the state, how Gov. Ikpeazu humiliated Ngwa elites.

Can we get to meet you Sir?

Yes, I am Lawrence Charles Nwangwa, from Obingwa LGA, I'm an entrepreneur and currently the MD/CEO, RUFTECH ALUMINIUM INDUSTRIES LTD an industry sited in the rural area.

The elections have come and gone, how does the emergence of Governor-Elect Dr Alex Chioma Otti OFR make you feel?

The emergence of His Excellency, Dr Alex Otti OFR, was a fulfilment for me; I had predicted after the 2019 elections that Dr Alex Otti will be the next Governor of the State. I never hid it as I told all who cared to know.

When PDP members especially those of Ukwa Ngwa extraction were riling his candidacy, I confronted them and told all that the psyche of Abia had

gone beyond sentiments and ad hominem but 'Who' can deliver Abia from the cesspit.

Therefore, I will say I am the happiest person over the victory of the Labour Party. Note it's not about Alex Otti –that would be trifling. What is on board is that a dynasty installed twenty-four years ago has been dismantled. The victory is phenomenal and ground shaking. If you research, you will find out that it is only in Abia and Lagos States that their ruling dynasties have never been disrupted. Lagos State is lucky that theirs was built on a progressive and visionary structure and it has been working well for them. This is in contradistinction with that of Abia State.

Why do you think the people of Abia chose to vote out PDP?

In addition to what I analysed above, the PDP government and its shenanigans was becoming intolerable, nauseating and odoriferous. The level of impunity and administrative rascality had gone beyond bikini amber. Mediocrity became elevated to statecraft. Abia State and her citizens under PDP had become something derisive beyond the shores of the state. Once you mention you are from Abia State, people start making negative jokes about you. It was this bad.

Almost everyone in Abia State today has heaved a sigh of relief even majority of PDP staunch members. As a matter of fact, most of them even within his Kitchen Cabinet worked against the Party.

As a key political figure in Obingwa, before the election, there was a campaign for an Ngwa project. What happened, why did it not work this time around?

I had stated that it will not work this time because the outgoing Governor himself provided a noose or cross to hang or crucify the Ngwa project or interest. He only remembered it when he felt that sentiment will help him but it was late. 80% of the true Ngwa elites never supported the 'Ikpeazu' Agenda this 2023.

Amongst the first things the outgoing Governor did was to humiliate the Ngwa elites except the very few you can count on your fingers that depended on his 'blood tonic'! Ngwa people are no fools. We have come of age and have worked so hard to be at par on individual basis with our neighbours and other Abia compatriots. Hence the currying of primordial irredentist sentiments this time around was dead on arrival.

Moreover, Dr Alex Otti has proved to be a true son of Ngwaland. He made his Isiala Ngwa South village a true home and added value to his



• Mr Lawrence Nwangwa

community. He has visible achievements incomparable with any other living Ngwa man of his calibre or contemporaries. I stand to be controverted. For instance the only existing or operational Bank in what is Ngwaland today outside municipal Aba is the one attracted and built by him. So you can add roads within Isiala Ngwa North and South. I can go on and on.

Let's look at the business environment in Abia State, as an investor, what are you expecting from the administration of Alex Otti that would better the business sector?

The enabling environment and ease of doing business, removal of incipient corruption and bottlenecks, putting necessary infrastructure like access roads, effective and micro governance; bringing to the fore, law and order, discipline amongst them effective traffic

management and proper pavement of roads with adequate signs and creating of bus routes to reduce the stress and frustration of the very low income earners. I can go on and on. The Good thing is that the incoming Governor is effectively accessible and I can always reach him. Most of his close aides are also my friends or people I know. Hence I will always engage them and together we will move this state forward.

Have you experienced double taxation in Abia State? If yes, what is your advice?

Finances and revenue have been poorly expropriated and appropriated. With Dr Alex Otti, it will be a breath of fresh air and new beginnings. Economy and Finance are an area the incoming governor has expertise and worldly acclaimed competence. Put your seatbelt and watch as we cruise from May 29, 2023.



Rt. Hon. Chinedum Orji

From Cover Page

Speaker speaks to Emenike Iroegbu on this and the emergence of Dr Alex Otti who defeated his party to clinch the governorship of the

state.

Let's meet him!

Sir the 7th Assembly under your leadership had actually been peaceful in the last four years; what eroded the peace and harmony which led to

Otti will meet 70% of Abians' expectations only if he's a magician – says Abia Speaker, speaks on purported impeachment

your impeachment?

Purported impeachment, you mean? We came to the House of Assembly determined with my colleagues to make a difference and no matter what transpired, I believe that most of us tried our best to live up to the mandate given to us by the electorate, most of them did very well in their various constituencies, but the issue of interference and those that feel that they are closer to the Governor; to the executive than myself began to play out, but a lot of propaganda; a lot of blackmail

became the order of the day, and I feel that at that point of where the peace and tranquillity of the house started eroding.

There are allegations that the 'purported impeachment' as you called it, was sponsored. Do you have any idea who did and what transpired?

I think personal interests have a lot to do with what transpired during this period. Like I said, personal interests by groups, few individuals that felt that they were close to the governor of the state, played a major role

to what Abians saw. To me, it was a show of shame. One of his (Governor Okezie Ikpeazu's) aides by name Erundu Junior wanted the rules of the House to be amended. In one of our rules as contained in our rule book; only a ranking member will aspire for the position of a presiding officer, unless the new members decides to suspend that rule of the House. So you cannot because you're acting like an assistant governor, decide that I'm your stumbling block to becoming the speaker of the 8th

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GOODWILL Message

On behalf of my family, Management and staff, and the **AKAJIUGO FOUNDATION** we felicitate with His Excellency Dr. Alex C Otti OFR, the **LABOUR PARTY** family and the good people of Abia State on the occasion of your swearing in and assumption of Office as the **EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF ABIA STATE**.

This marks a new dawn which we have fervently prayed for.

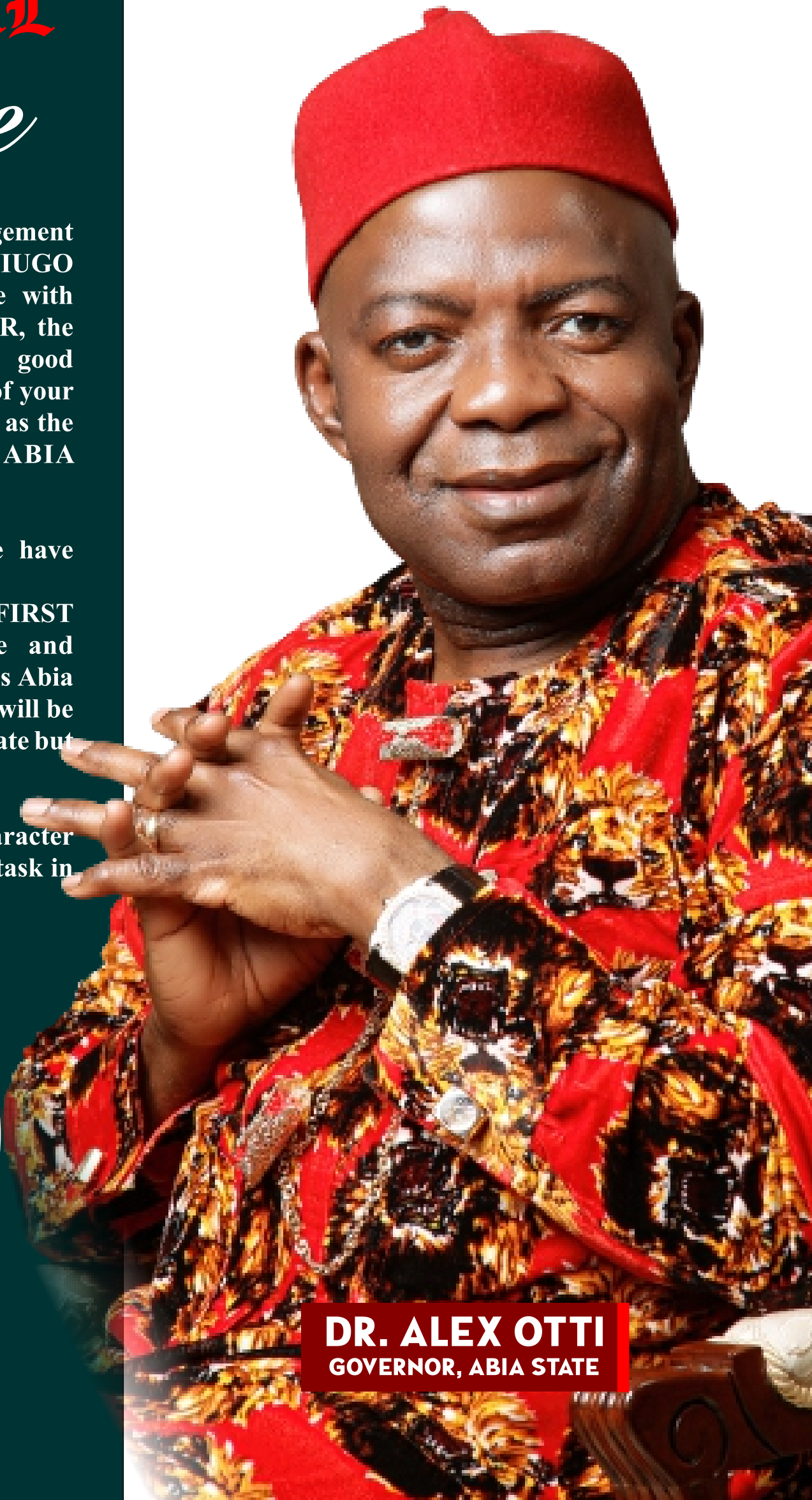
May God grant you and your **FIRST ELEVEN** wisdom, sagacity, grace and favours to paddle the macadam that is Abia State today to an enviable height that will be to the consternation of not just Abia State but Nigeria and the world at large.

We trust in your ability, capacity, character and content to carry out the onerous task in Jesus name. Amen.

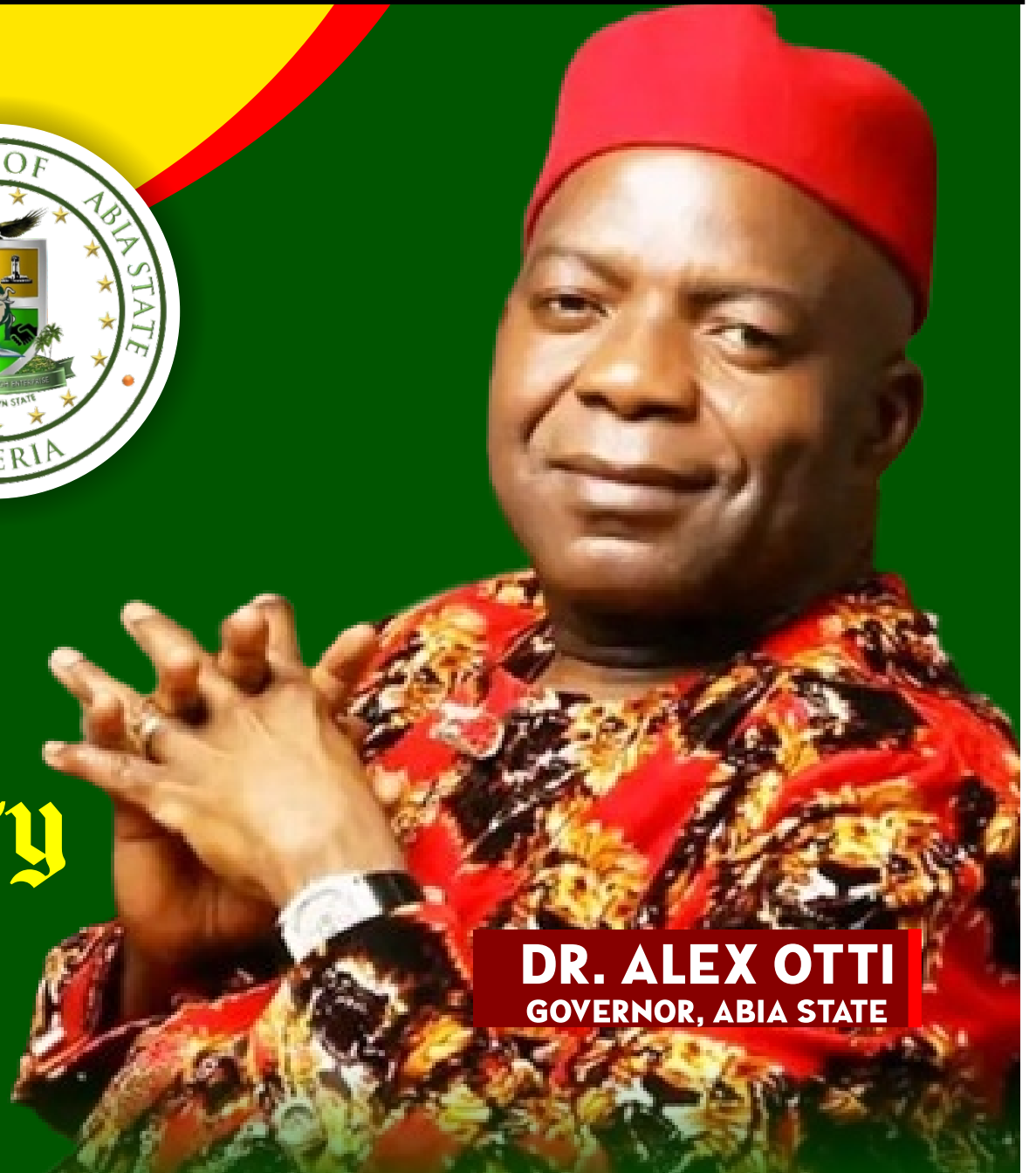
Jisieike.



**CHIEF LAWRENCE CHARLES
NWANGWA JP
(AKAJIUGO).**



**DR. ALEX OTTI
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE**



DR. ALEX OTTI
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE

Congratulatory Message

The elections have come and gone; this is the time for true leadership for our dear Abia State.

The task ahead is herculean, the expectation from ndi Abia is high, but I believe that with transparency, commitment and focus, your administration can contribute greatly in transforming this God's Own State.

With your track record from the corporate world, your experience and commitment towards Abia State, I am of the opinion that you are in the best place to turnaround the tide.

Abians have spoken by voting you, it is now up to you to fulfil your campaign promises.

I pray you succeed, I pray you exceed expectation and I pray that your administration bring about great democratic dividends to the people.

Long Live Abia State



ERIC OPAH

CEO & founder of Fortune Global Shipping and Logistics Limited
Chairman, Nigeria-America Chamber of Commerce, Abia State Chapter
Associate Member of the Institute of Directors of Nigeria (IODN)
President of Eric OPAH Foundation
Founder/President of Mbubo Transformation Group.
President Umunna Nsulu Progressive Forum

Otti will meet 70% of Abians' expectations only if he's a magician – says Abia Speaker, speaks on purported impeachment

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Assembly, you now decide that since I refused for that rule to be amended that a lot of propaganda should be spilled against my person. I don't believe that it is my responsibility to determine for the next governor of the state who his Speaker, or how he intends to go about the inauguration of the 8th Assembly. As far as I'm concerned, my tenure ends by June 10. Whatever happens after that is not my business.

Secondly, these same people will always create the impression that I want to impeach the governor of the state. And I continue asking that question, if I impeach the governor of the state, will I be governor? No. So, If I impeach the governor, of what benefit is it to me? And these are the stories that has characterised my tenure as Speaker of the House of Assembly and this as I've told you is the reason this same aide now recruited some of my colleagues to give the impression that I'm not loyal to the governor.

Do you have any evidence for this?

When you have a deputy speaker that takes directives from an aide to the governor; that records the executive session proceedings to forward to them; in that recording everybody that says whatever they say, is recorded. When you come to Executive Session, you have four phones, one is on permanent recording and everything that anybody says is transmitted to him; what do you say to that? Or when you have one of my brothers around here whom I won't like to mention his name make it a lifelong obsession to be above me; somebody that never played a role in the making of this government; somebody that didn't know how he emerged as a governor trying all he could to blackmail me before them, what do you say to that? So when we look at the charade that they did, the House was adjourned and the former Deputy Speaker, without the consent of the Speaker, reconvened outside the premises of the legislative arm of government in a government guest house on a dining table with the offer of

monetary inducement. What other evidence do you need?

Let them show us from the list; we are 24 in number, let us prove it here how they are 16. I'll like us to prove it, how are they 16?

They have showcased signatures of House members who signed as regards to the said impeachment. Now, they said they are 16, based on that number; that means you have a lesser number of people on your side, can you dispute that?

The Chief Whip of the house, Honourable Kelechi Onuzurike did he sign? Honourable Stanley Nwabuisi, did he sign?

There's a signature of his there.

Did you see the statement that he brought out the next day? Did you read the statement? So what does that tell you? He took permission from me to travel to Canada to see his family, so how could he have signed the letter from Canada?

Did you see the signature of Hon. Alan Nnamdi Nwachukwu there?

For you to have an impeachment of Speaker, those that are against the Speaker must show body presence and say that they own that signature, not telling us that you have 16 signatures. And I have just mentioned three on this side. You know how many we are. So how many have you reduced it to? I am not competing with them, or their numbers, all I'm telling you is that at the end of the day, when you verify the signatures that are signed, they're not more than nine, let them prove that they are more than nine, then we'll start talking.

The former Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly, Accused you of being high handed, pocketing them and withholding his security vote for nine months, could you clarify that?

I do not want to be rude to an honourable member. And I do not want to engage him, because he must operate at a certain intellectual level, academic level to engage me. Since he is lacking in those two, I do not want to engage him. As far as I'm concerned, the issue of security vote is at the discretion of the Speaker. I



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decide who I would give it to. If you're hobnobbing with someone that has assumed the position of an assistant governor in the state, and wants to pocket everybody; wants to pocket the Office of the Deputy Governor; if not for the discipline and the respect that the SSG gives himself, he will also pocket the office of the Secretary to the Government. You have pocketed all the commissioners, all the local government chairmen, you decide what happens in JAAC, and you equally now want to extend it to the House of Assembly, and my Deputy Speaker now aligned himself with such a person. I don't think I'm a fool to tolerate such a character.

Somebody that his duty is to record what I and other members say at the executive session and report verbatim to his master, and if his master was the governor direct, I will not bother. But being subservient to a mere aide to the governor, is something that I cannot tolerate any longer. And that is the reason that I decided to channel that aspect of the money to other meaningful use. It is not his right; it is my right to give. So I'm not here to deny it. Even though he's claiming that it's nine months, it's falsehood. For six months, I withheld it and I used it to do other meaningful things, because you cannot empower your enemy; he made himself my enemy. Why are other members of the House not complaining? Why are the other principal officers not complaining? Has any other

principal officer come out to tell you that the entitlement that is due to them from the Speaker's security vote does not get to them? Why is it only him that is complaining? The paper I have here, which you can only see on camera, because I told you I will not expose my colleagues, shows you that at any point in time that one of our allowances, (we have legitimate allowances in the house), you will see that one of them is the same amount that is given to ranking members, every person that is here gets the same amount that the speaker gets, and his name is there; he is getting those monies, the only money that he is not getting is the security vote, which I feel that he's not entitled to.

But he said he is entitled to it?

He is not entitled to it. Because it is the same thing with the governor's security vote, the governor can decide not to give you anything, there is nothing you can do about it. He is not entitled to it.

So it's not a constitutional right?

No.

The security vote is at your discretion?

It is at my discretion, I decide whatever I do with it and I'm asking you to ask the other members of the House of Assembly; our principal officers; ask them if their security vote does not get to them, from the majority leader, to the minority whip.

Mr. Speaker you've talked over and over of this aide of the

governor who is allegedly pocketing almost every angle of government, is it not your duty to check-mate these activities as the leader of the House of Assembly with other members?

I am the Speaker of the House, I'm not oblivious of my antecedents and what some actions that I will take may or may not generate. I have seen so much interference. Like I said, this interview is specifically based on to talk about the House of Assembly. I'm not here to talk about the governor, as far as I'm concerned, excluding this so called Assistant governors, the man (Governor Okezie Ikpeazu) is quite a humble person and he knows the role I played, and it is that role that I played which I have not bragged about that has made him to have equal level of respect for me.

For me, I promised him in 2015 that I will not be a stumbling block to his government; I have always given a good advice. My own father may not have done all that is expected of him as a governor, I do not also expect this out-going governor to do all that had been expected of him. I don't also expect that the expectations of Abians in the incoming governor (Dr Alex Otti) will be met 70% by him, unless he is a magician. But what a leader needs are people that are selfless, that can tell you that the grassroots is complaining, because the governor cannot be at two places at the same time. If somebody that supported the

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Otti will meet 70% of Abians' expectations only if he's a magician – says Abia Speaker, speaks on purported impeachment

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governor in 2015 is doing a ceremony; Is bereaved or is doing something in Bende or Isuikwato, it is your responsibility as an aide to remind him of that person's role and of the need for him to visit, if there are some promises that the governor made, it is also your responsibility to remind him. Like I said, because of our scarcity of funds, there is no governor that can do all that is expected of him. I'll give you an example, when the NBA decided to do their strike, which they have the right to in Aba, the members of the House, including one of the ring leaders of this purported charade, happens to be a former speaker, was the one that convinced me and convinced the other colleagues that there is need for us to go to Aba and quell that impending protest. He did give that advice; I won't because we are having issues discredit him; unlike them I'm too civil, he gave it out of passion, that the governor was not around, and we as a House decided that we will go. We entered our bus and left Umuahia by two o'clock to go to Aba to meet with NBA first to plead with them not to do that which they wanted to do. After meeting the NBA people at high court, one of them that is now with them in this their charade, suggested that we visit some of those sites the members agreed and we visited them, we didn't say anything against the governor when we came back, but the level of propaganda, blackmail that we were subjected to because of that visit was unbelievable. Let me tell you something, if our finances with respect to IGR are not vigorously pursued; there is no miracle any governor will do if the IGR of the state is not tackled head on. What I asked the governor when they blackmailed me before him was "governor, what will be my gain, going to Aba to discredit you? Is it not myself that I'm discrediting?" because people will ask me a question that if your father had done that road, then Okezie would have done another one. Government is a continuum, I won't stay here and claim that my father did every road in Aba or did everything that Aba people wanted or even

Umuahia people. But like I said, government is a continuum; that was when he knew that I have no ulterior motives to embarrass him. Why would I embarrass him? He's a governor in PDP; I'm the speaker in PDP, why would I embarrass him? But these people that have surrounded him have never seen anything good in me to report to him.

Why would they not want to work with you effectively? What are the reasons for undermining you?

It is because I don't like their style that Abians are used to. The governor comes here; he tries as much as he can to do as many projects as he can. Two, the governor tries as much as he can to carry the youths and the stakeholders along. No matter what anybody says in this state, you don't group all stakeholders as not being relevant, it's not done anywhere. If they're not relevant, in the scheme of things in this state, why did we fail election? Why did we not see any stakeholder coming out of their polling unit and at the collation centres from Ukwu East to Isuikwato? Why did they lock themselves up during the election? It's because of these people. And they know that I've been against their system of shutting reasonable people away from the governor and that is why when I see the governor, I will tell him my mind and because I tell the governor my mind, it will be interpreted that maybe this one is not loyal or whatever, you cannot tell the governor the news or what he wants to hear, it's not possible. Like I told you, I'm always very careful when I talk about the present governor, because my father has sat on that seat. And as far as I'm concerned, nobody is perfect. You need reasonable, dedicated people around the governor to help him to succeed; to remind him of things that he has forgotten, and that is where the problem lies.

Sir, you have been in the Abia State House of Assembly for the past eight years. What has been your high point in terms of serving the people in your constituency?

You know that if it's about provision of infrastructure, you're in Umuahia, if you're to rate me, I'm sure of the pass



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mark that you'll give to me in terms of provision of infrastructure, which is not my core area of responsibility, but I have at least reasonably done well within my constituency, and when I became Speaker, I extended it to the entire nine clans plus Urban 10 clans of Ikwuano/Umuahia federal constituency. I do not like to blow my own trumpet, my constituency is a very difficult constituency with a lot of urban non-indigene population, and because people like us have been around, you need to continually work hard to warm your way and your person into the hearts of people. As far as I'm concerned, I've done reasonably well in that regard. With respect to the constituency, if you check the number of votes garnered, you'll agree with me that apart from the manipulations and rigging that occurred in Umuahia south and the Urban constituency, the result in the last election would have been a different matter, everybody was shocked that it went that way, but I know what happened in Umuahia south, I know what happened in urban constituency and some other areas, so when it comes to the area of provision of infrastructure, no politician scores himself but I will say I've done reasonably well to meet the expectations of my constituency.

You lost your bid to represent Umuahia/Ikwuano Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives to the candidate of the labour party.

Would you say you're one of the victims of what has been tagged Obi-wave?

Well, the Obi-wave was a phenomenon, our people; the Igbos rightly felt that we have a good candidate to represent them as president, so PDP was swimming against the tides of the Obi-wave. Yes, we had a defect in our election, as people felt that even in the first election that the ballot papers given to them were.... but even at that, I want you to take a look at the result that I had, and compare with others and also, look closely at the areas of infractions that I've told you, then you put one and one together. I wouldn't be kind to myself if I say that Obi wave didn't contribute, but it wasn't the factor that led to not winning on the general level. Other factors which I'll like to keep to me played a role in it.

So what is the future of the PDP in the state, having lost the Governorship seat for the first time in twenty-four years?

The future of the PDP in the state is that they need to bounce back, go back to the drawing board seriously, do some re-strategy, re-organization, bring in faces that the people like, rebuild and re-launch. That's all I can say.

So what about the stakeholders? You've been saying stakeholders in PDP have failed, so I would like to know more about them.

I want to ask you a question, is it all the stakeholders that failed? Go and check the result of some of the stakeholders and see

whether all of them failed. There are still some stakeholders, even those that are not recognized that passed. I don't believe that somebody that has stayed thirty, twenty-five years in politics and all of a sudden, you'll tell me that the person is no more relevant. It's not possible. Did you empower him to be relevant? Abia has a lot of these stakeholders, but less attention was paid to the upcoming stakeholders within the ages of 35, 40 and 45. And, that was where we made the mistake because those within that age bracket have people that they control also; they are mainly lawyers, doctors, businessmen outside the state. But they have influence in their local governments and communities. So what happened during the election was that, those people came back and people listened to them, they convinced them otherwise. Meanwhile, the original stakeholders in the state were just looking at the events.

Mr Speaker, there are some rumours that you have intentions to leave the party, do you have any intentions to leave the PDP?

No comment!

How does a speaker emerge in the house? What is the possibility of a rule book being suspended on the first day of appearance in the house?

Let me use my own emergence as example. I emerged unopposed because my colleagues supported me; there

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Otti will meet 70% of Abians' expectations only if he's a magician – says Abia Speaker, speaks on purported impeachment

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was no challenge, no opposition. If there are nominations, let's say two or three other persons then it will be voted; we have 24 members in that house of assembly, they will vote. If there are two contending people or three, the members will vote, and they will vote by the process as determined by the rule book which will be implemented by the clerk of the House. If there are no nominations, then you emerge unopposed but if there are other people that will be nominated by members; I could nominate somebody, the leader of the House can nominate; So if you have the three members, they'll put it to vote and the speaker will emerge, and it was the same process that the Deputy Speaker will also emerge. And don't forget that if you have a sitting governor of another political party, he will not fold his hands and not play the politics that others are supposed to play. He plays the same politics. And if he does the playing of that politics, it also plays a role, but like I said, it is the members that are very key in determining who emerges because they are the people that vote. And that's why I told people that, one; the members, two; the governor, three; stakeholders. Why? Because, most of the members that emerged, emerged through the process of help from the stakeholders.

Those people will call them and say this is the person we want you to vote for. The governor will also say, members of the party, this is who I want you to vote for. It is politics. Then the members will look at the contenders and say this is the person we want to vote for. Look at what is happening at the national assembly, the politics has already started. People are campaigning for the position, it's politics. You don't say it's only members, you're saying some influential people will not play a role in who emerges as the senate president, speaker of the federal house of representative? It's not possible. You won't say that the incoming president of Nigeria will not play a role in

calling members of his party and telling them that this is what he wants to do? No. it is after that and everybody's position has been assigned through the voting by the members and the party tenders in or writes for the position of a leader, deputy leader and all the rest that they will now assume their independence and start. That is how a speaker is made.

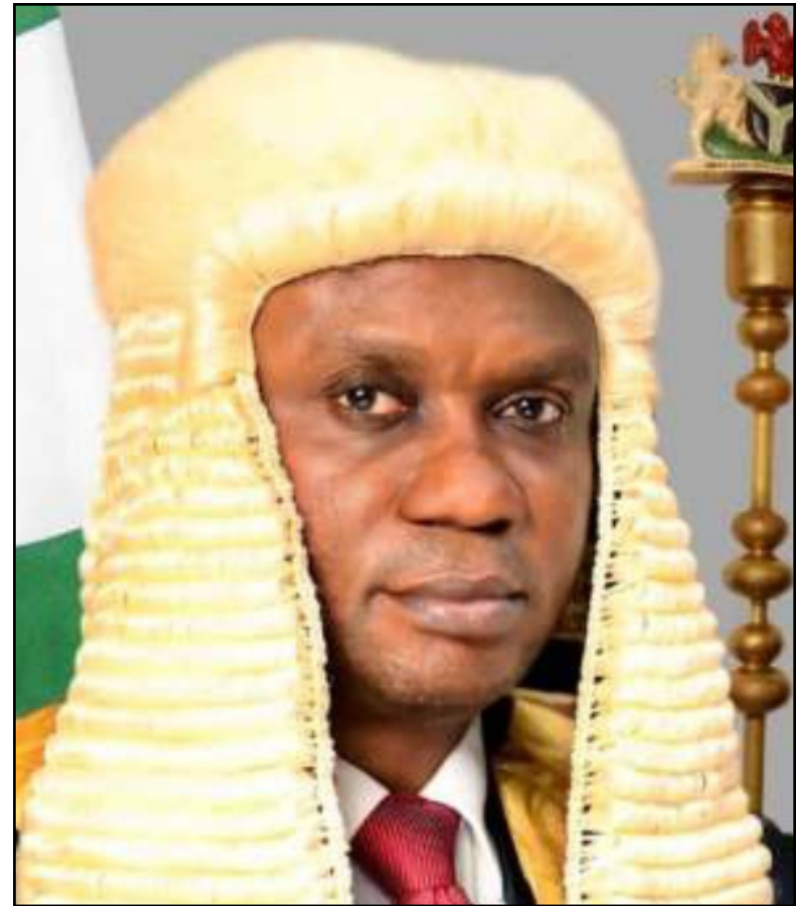
So there cannot be a suspension of the rule, except the House have been inaugurated and a Speaker emerges?

No, once the members come on that day, and have fully administered their oath of office, because on that day, I will not be there, my tenure would have elapsed, so on that day, the Clerk of the House becomes the Speaker extemporal. As he has administered the oath to the members, they will decide if they need to suspend the rule. That is why I kept on telling these assistant governors that want to be Speaker that you don't need to put fire in the Abia State House of Assembly because you want to become speaker of the 8th Assembly, it is your colleagues when they administer that oath of allegiance and all the rest on that day that will decide to suspend the rule of the House to do what they want to do. You don't need to do it now because I will not allow it as long as I'm Speaker. I will not; we better leave that decision to be taken by the incoming 8th House of Assembly members, I will not dictate that for them.

In the incoming House of Assembly, obviously we have multi parties; what would be your advice to them if the state would have to move forward successfully?

The People have spoken, whether we like it or not. Even though there are areas of breach of electoral guidelines, which the normal processes, anybody that feels aggrieved can go to the courts. But for now, we are not going to castigate anybody because somebody lost election, no. On the 10th of June, or any other day that the proclamation will be sent to the governor and approved that the

new House will be inaugurated, the members from the various political parties will be sworn in and the jostling for the position of Speaker will start. I don't want to talk about that because it's not my area of jurisdiction anymore. That area is left for the 24 new members. That's their decision to make, not mine. My advice would be that this State needs to move forward. When PDP had been winning elections, the other parties would go to court, and after winning them in court, they would go and become opposition to PDP, unfortunately, we now find ourselves being the opposition, but I prefer constructive criticism, not destructive one that we've been experiencing. Not tomorrow people instead of telling the governor elect, that will soon be governor, please you have not done this and that, you have not done this road for us, you will start picking on his children, his wife and his personal life, it's not fair, as far as I'm concerned. The House of Assembly will play a major role in helping any government here to succeed. Anybody that tells you that a state cannot borrow money to do project is telling you lies; anybody that tells you that House of Assembly is just a rubber stamp, is telling you lies. You can engage in constructive criticism of government to get what you want so that the state can move forward. We will not because we lost election, then we decide to truncate the transition, lately people are claiming that they are laying landmines, I don't believe that this governor is laying landmines, he's just exercising his powers as a governor. From now till the 29th of May, he is the governor of the state. Any decision he takes now can be reversed by the in-coming governor if he wants, so why are people bothering themselves. If the man likes now, he can appoint one thousand SAs tomorrow by 29th May, at 4pm BCA will be busy with numerous assignments, statements and whatever. And there's nothing anybody can do about it so for now he can go ahead with whatever decision that he wants



Rt. Hon. Chinedum Orji

to take.

As you are bowing out of government, what will you be doing to keep yourself busy?

I will be engaging in politics here, nobody can chase me away. No matter the envy, propaganda, the back-biting, I cannot run away, this state is my state. I am not perfect, even the criticisms, that I've gone through have made me a better person to work harder. I appreciate when people criticize me constructively. It has made me become a better person.

I'm not usually a media friendly person so there are a lot of misconceptions about me and I do nothing to correct it. Only by those that come to me. I may not say that I've satisfied everybody, but every person that has come across me but I know that I've tried my best to accommodate as many as possible. I know that in the cause of my political career, I might have inherited a lot of enemies; I might have also made some for myself. That is politics for you. But I have also learnt a lot of valuable lessons in the area of trust, in the area of empowerment, there are people that will die for you politically but they don't make noise but there are those that will come and make noise from here to Sapele and tell you how they're going to do this and that for you, but at the slightest

opportunity they will betray you. And one day, those people that are silently supporting you will get pissed off, that you abandoned them, which is normal in politics. I have done some apologies to those that feel hurt. I don't want anybody to look at this election as a do or die affair. Change is inevitable but if you feel shortchanged, you go to court. If you feel that your mandate was stolen, if you feel that there are other external factors that led to somebody's "defeat," you approach the court. If you prove your case, fine. But it's not something that we'll start setting the state on fire because of ambition

After all, in 2015, I would have been Speaker, but I decided that it is not necessary because as from 2015, I told them I was not coming there to become Speaker from 2015 to 2019. Immediately I won my re-election in 2019, I approached the governor that I would like to become Speaker, and I went there unopposed. Since then, I've tried my best to satisfy my constituents, I may not have done all that they expected, but I do not expect the level of betrayal some of them had to engage because of paltry sum of money. That is why if you decide to fight me in such a very dangerous manner, to stain my reputation with impeachment, I have every reason to fight back to stain theirs also, it's one one.

Government shouldn't be dumping ground for mediocrities, Abia youth leader tells Otti, reels out expectations

from page 5

What are the expectations of Abia youths from Dr Alex Otti?

Inclusion, we have had a whole lot of divisive politics in this state where a certain quarter believes that when they get into power that it is their turn and time and they want to get all the juicy appointments, and they want to get all the allocation. We want to see a deviation from the norm.

We paid the price for this to happen. We don't see this victory as an Alex Otti victory we see it as a victory for Abia Youths and Abians in general.

We have 12 pillars of expectations from Alex Otti; they include; infrastructure, security, welfare, education, health care, agriculture, sports (including persons with disability), youth development and sustainable empowerment, transportation, technology, government revenue as well as environmental sustainability.

In the area of infrastructure, we expect a total transformation of the infrastructural sector of Abia State; and we expect that some of these projects that have been executed on paper are revisited and properly scrutinized and executed where necessary. We don't want to see abandoned government projects again. He has a very big job to do in the area of revisiting abandoned projects. There are so many abandoned projects in Abia.

In the area of electricity, we also expect that this government will take advantage of the recent bill signed recently by the president that allows states generate power. We have different platforms here that can generate power; so we expect this government to take advantage of that, maybe to establish a PPP strategy that will allow investors to come in that area thereby creating jobs for a lot of young people.

We are also expecting the government to work on pipe borne water. Overtime you find out that in areas like Aba, we don't have good water in most places. We expect this incoming administration to work on revitalising that sector to make water available for the people because in developed cities, these are not privileges, they are



Kingsley Ekejiuba

norms people should enjoy.

On the part of security, we feel that the current administration did some good work at least Abia remains the safest state in the whole of the South East.

There are some things to be learnt; we envisage some level of partnership in that regard to find out what this administration did in that sector.

The incoming administration should also strengthen local security at community levels. Each community has a vigilante, so there's the need to form a state wide network that incorporates all these singular units available in the local communities to form this very solid security network that would help compliment the police.

Putting up lights on the streets because if you have a security situation and the whole place is lightened up, you'll be able to see who is coming and then you can take proper security measures.

We are not happy with the fact that once its 7-8pm, Umuahia becomes a ghost town.

We've identified the need to properly do an assessment in all the sectors of Abia and identify those who are genuine workers; even those genuine workers, put them through training to improve their performance level to produce better results, such that the state gets to benefit, and those who are



Dr. Alex Otti

getting services from the state will get good services for their money.

There is need for him to do proper assessment of those that are supposed to be receiving gratuity; pensioners, workers – all those agencies of governments that are over staffed should be downsized and those affected should be paid severance packages so that the culture of owing salaries is not continued.

If he pays them off won't that add to the unemployment rate we already have in the state?

I had talked about constituting a PPP arrangement that allows for investors to come in and create some of these industries that will in turn create employment opportunities, I believe that if some of these things are harnessed; some of these agencies of government that are moribund are activated, that can also add value to take these people in but people should only be employed by competence and character. Government should not be a dumping ground for people of low capacity and intellectual quotient.

Government is a serious business, and anybody that wants to serve in that capacity must be able to pay the price of improving themselves with the necessary intellectual, social and whatever skills necessary to serve the public.

We know that it is not going to be easy for Dr Alex Otti but if we want to move this state from where it is to where we want it to be, the incoming administration must be able to take some very strong decisions that may not favour everybody. We expect him to adopt a new methodology in the assemblage of the civil service work force that will be able to deliver on the mandate.

The persons who we think should be relieved of their duties if they fail to exhibit a certain level of responsibility expected from a public official can also take up other advantages that the government should put in place in terms of entrepreneurship because we believe strongly that this government should pay attention to agriculture by reactivating all the farm settlements that we have across the state. The outgoing administration was not able to harness the potentials of the agricultural sector.

Looking at the area of infrastructure, we also feel that the era of government talking about building schools should be over. We want this administration to focus on renovating already existing structures. If you go to every community in this state, you will find dilapidated primary or secondary school structures. In renovating these structures, they would spend less and achieve better results.

We also want the government to invest heavily on sports, encourage young people who are passionate about sports to advance their career and also consider those with special disability because we observed that these people do us proud at the Olympics and other world games.

Youth development and sustainable empowerment are paramount for the youths of Abia. We don't want this emergency empowerment, we want the opportunities that will be coming from the government to be well thought out and designed with a sustainability plan so that the youths can be well empowered.

We talked about introduction of industries in the state, creating opportunities for employment that will make these young people useful. Progressive Abia Youths has very vibrant youths that are tech savvy and we will be willing to have these guys work with the government in areas that need automation. Introducing technology in some of these sectors will help reduce waste in different sectors of leadership and governance in the state.

Bringing technology into play in our education sector; engage the tech savvy youths as teachers to teach technology in the basic centre such

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Congratulatory Message

Congratulatory message to his Excellency, Dr Alex Chioma Otti OFR, the Executive Governor of Abia State on your victory at the polls.

Pastor Dike B Nwankwo and the entire Dike's family felicitate and congratulate the Executive Governor of Abia State, Dr Alex Otti and the Deputy Governor Engr Ikechukwu Emetu on your resounding and landslide victory at the polls in the just concluded gubernatorial elections.

Our Holy book in Eccl 3:11 says " He makes all things beautiful at His own time, Your Excellency this is your time and turn.

From the time you left your comfort and flourishing career in the Bank in 2014 and made a foray into politics to salvage Abia from the doldrums, the narrative radically shifted because you provided a lone vociferous opposition that usually send shivers to the previous Government..

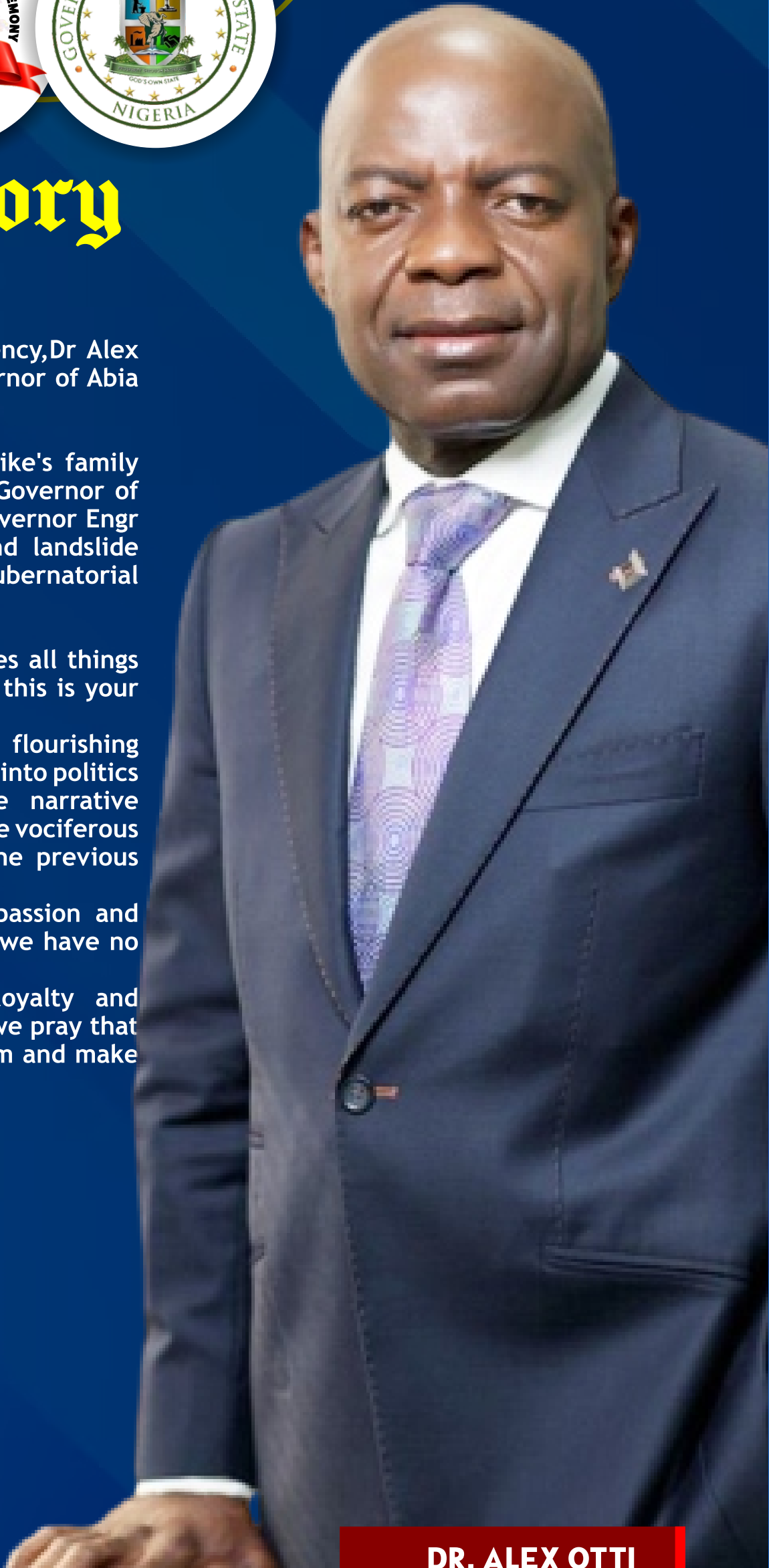
With the ingenuity of your personality, passion and purposefulness of result driven paradigm, we have no doubt that a new Abia is here.

We therefore pledge our unflinching loyalty and unalloyed support to your Government as we pray that God grant you wisdom to always please Him and make Abians happy.

Long live Abia State
Long live Nigeria



**PASTOR & MRS
DIKE B. NWANKWO**



DR. ALEX OTTI
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE



UKWA WEST LABOUR PARTY, LP, CONGRATULATES **DR. ALEX CHIOMA OTTI OFR,** EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF ABIA STATE.

The Party Chairman, Leaders, Stakeholders & entire members of the Labour Party, LP, Ukwa West Local Government Area chapter, heartily congratulate our Godsend Governor, His Excellency, Dr Alex Chioma Otti, Abia State Governor for his well deserved landside victory on the 18th of March Gubernatorial Election.

Your Excellency, this victory is total liberation of Abia from bad governance, primitive acquisition of wealth, slavery, decayed infrastructure, non-payment of salaries and pensions, hunger and starvation, dilapidated roads etc.

We remember with great excitement the book of Psalm, chapter 118 vs 24, which says "This is the day the Lord has made, We will rejoice and be glad in it"

Your Excellency Sir, the people of Ukwa West, the oil-rich LGA, which can best be described as the treasure base of Abia State, are very proud of you.

Though the enemies of democracy distorted the picture of the massive support of Ukwa West people for you through senseless manipulations, we are optimistic that it will not repeat itself.

Our amiable Governor,

Sir, we are hopeful that you shall fulfil your promises to us, and implement your well articulated manifesto for the people of Abia State.

Your Excellency, it can never become redundant to call you a great mentor, a social crusader, a nation builder, a seasoned banker and an administrator per-excellence.

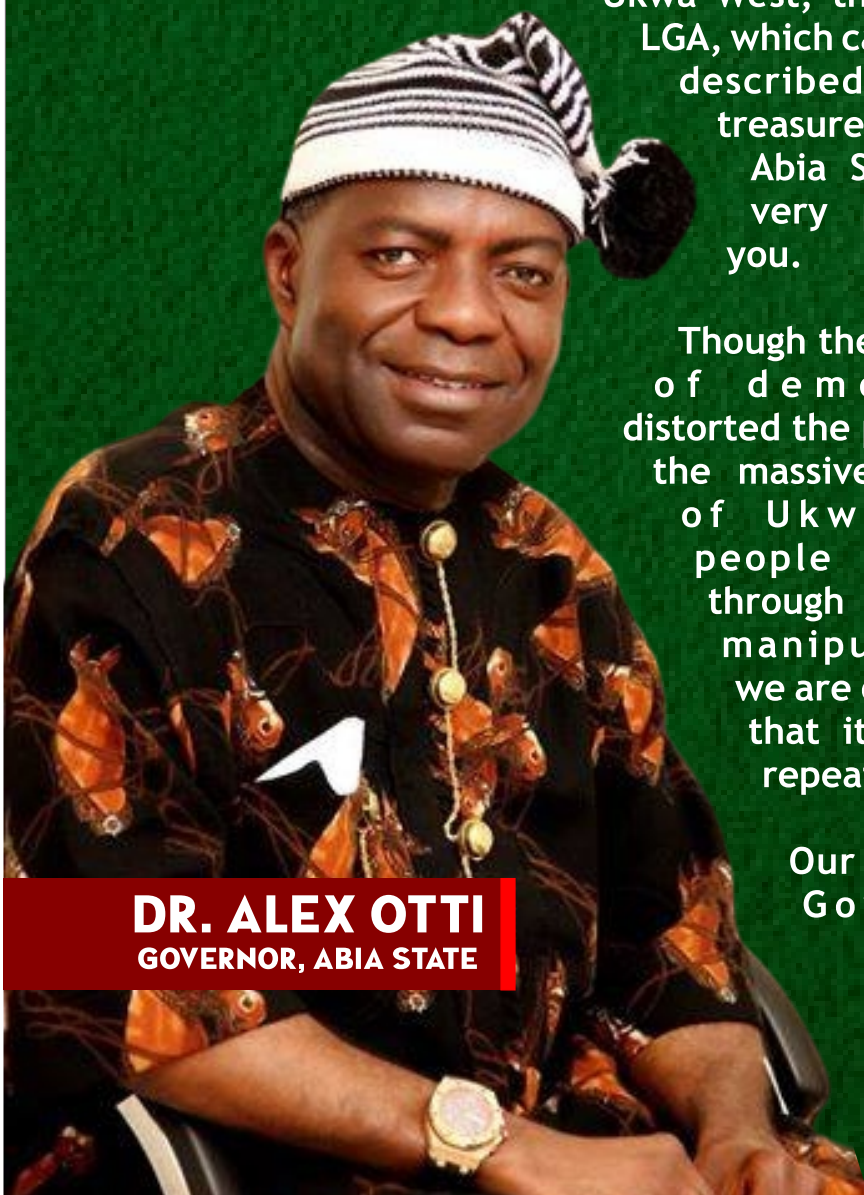
The people of Ukwa West, and indeed Abia State were moved by your campaign theme, "Weep No More Help Is On The Way".

As a people, we pledge our unalloyed loyalty and support to your government.

Long live Dr Alex Otti,
Long live Labour Party,
Long live Abia State,
Long live Nigeria.

Signed

- 1.) Pastor Dike Nwankwo
- 2.) Elder Ihenyerechi O. Dike
- 3.) Felix Ulelu
- 4.) Dr. Chike Eugene Okpokiri
- 5.) Oluomachi Nwosu
- 6.) Philemon Asonye Ogbonna
- 7.) Elder Lucky Dike
- 8.) Chigbundu Monday
- 9.) Chijioke E. Jite
- 10.) Joel Nwankwo
- 11.) Ndukauba Adiele
- 12.) Chief George Nwancha
- 13.) Ass. Prof Onwubiko Dike
- 14.) Ememe Uchenna Smart
- 15.) Uchenna Nwagbara
- 16.) Evang. Jacob Nwachi
- 17.) Sir P. C. Agomuo
- 18.) Engr. Sam Uzoumunne
- 19.) Sir Chibuike Alozie
- 20.) Newman James
- 21.) Princewill O. Ojeh



DR. ALEX OTTI
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE

Government shouldn't be dumping ground for mediocrities, Abia youth leader tells Otti, reels out expectations

from page 18

that the young people are able to learn these skills and compete with their mates.

A full automation of the transportation sector to raise revenue, train agents in the transport sector to be able to be accountable and not harass people is equally needed.

In all of these, we feel that an inclusive approach that will bring all the resources of Abia both human, natural and others together to design that prosperous state that we all want should be in place.

The governor, Dr Alex Otti, must not play into the hands of divisive elements that are always quick to degrade people or make little of people's efforts. The governor must be able to open his doors to Abians to be able to contribute their quota to the development of the state.

What's your advice to Abia youths?

Invest in yourself. You can never be the best if you don't invest in yourself. Whatever skill you have, develop on it; opportunities will come. We believe that this government will create opportunities for the youths. We preach competence and capability; so it will be a misnomer if an opportunity comes up and the youths do not have the requisite capability to handle such responsibilities. My message to the young people is to keep faith, believe in the process and invest in self-development.

On Mon, May 22, 2023, 5:10 PM
Faith Ukanwa
<ukanwafaith97@gmail.com> wrote:
Some Of Dr. Alex Otti, the Fourth Democratically Elected Governor of Abia State's Promises To Abians.
By Faith Ukanwa

- Only persons with proven career history and records of professional and career accomplishment are appointed to serve in his administration.

- All appointees and senior government officials including himself, would publicly declare their assets regularly, for public scrutiny.

- To reconstruct the long abandoned Port-Harcourt road, Aba and others.

- Remodel all government approved motor parks.

- To Complete works at the permanent site of the Abia State Government House.

- Ensure that all government officials will sign a Service Level Agreement (SLA) that clearly outlines his stewardship to the citizens.



Kingsley Ekejiuba

- To carry out a periodic performance review will be carried out to ensure that optimum service levels are consistently delivered to the public.

- To transform the process of governance by reforming the public service structure.

- To help public servants acquire relevant technology-based skills that will make them more productive and efficient.

- Access existing processes to see possible areas to eliminate waste and corruption.

- Run a full e-compliant administration for the first three years.

- Transit land administration from the current manual processes to a digital process that will ensure completion of land title transfer within five working days.

- Work with the legislature to amend the fiscal responsibility act to make it more responsive, transparent, and easier to administer.

- Partner with local trade unions, chambers of commerce, industry and agriculture, community development associations and town unions to create a suitable framework to drive Abia's integrated economic development framework.

- Re-engineer all MDAs and institutions connected with the economic and infrastructural development of Abia, to become fit-for-purpose and more responsive to emerging needs.

- Partnership with neighbouring states in areas of mutual economic interests, such as agriculture, infrastructural development, and security.

- Eliminate all forms of illegal taxation and levies. Introduce e-based process of tax and levy administrations that will ensure that

tax proceeds are domiciled in the state treasury.

- A periodic publication of the state's audited account to strengthen accountability and for public assessment.

- To run a transparent and open government.

- Build need-oriented infrastructure development in the communities.

- Build economic projects with multiplier effects on employment generation, wealth creation.

- Utilisation of local raw materials in various parts of the state for revenue generation.

- Restore the financial autonomy of Local Government Areas in the state.

- Construct a functional light rail system to connect the 17 LGAs for easy movement of goods and agricultural products.

- Cut the cost of governance.

- Support the private sector to create jobs.

- Revive the night life in Abia to boost the economy.

- Pay all outstanding salaries and pensions 6-months into office.

- Pay retirees their pensions and entitlements as and when due.

- Create a ministry of Aba to design, implement and provide key enablement for the economic rejuvenation of Aba as an economic hub.

- Provide holistic infrastructural development in Aba to create a model city that supports businesses, family life and leisure activities.

- Incubate 1000 new SMEs within the Aba industrial corridor annually.

- Establish technical skills development programs to further empower entrepreneurs in Aba especially in the areas of automation, use of technology to improve quality and productivity.

- To seek and encourage innovative investors

- Upgrade existing markets and their support infrastructure and also support them with facilities such as; fire service, waste disposal systems, security cameras, rest rooms, medical centres, etc.

- Recall illegally sacked workers.

- Reform Enyimba football club.

- Create a fund scheme; "Labour Party Cooperative Society" for business people, artisans, farmers and apprentices in the state to help them with either capital to start a business or support their already existing businesses to ensure that they are financially independent.

- Provide the necessary infrastructure that will enable the judiciary to leverage on technology in dispensing timely justice to the people.

- Decongest the courts by supporting the judiciary in harnessing the opportunities for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

- Conduct LGA elections as and when due, offering the people an opportunity to elect their choicest candidate.

Work with LGAs to access opportunities and grants from multilateral agencies concerned with development.

- Partner with LGAs to increase internet penetration in the communities

- Restructure the operational framework at the Abia State Independent Electoral Commission (ABSIEC) to transform into a truly Independent organisation capable of conducting free fair credible and transparent elections at the LGAs.

- Establish welfare programmes for the elderly and the extremely poor

- Use counterpart funding to encourage community participation in development projects.

- Introduce community sports and cultural festivals as a way of reinventing our culture and boosting tourism.

- Partner with Internet Service Providers, telecommunication companies and others to expand their facilities to communities so that youths can leverage on the high speed internet and robust telephone services to drive their businesses right from their communities.

- Collaborate with Electricity Distribution Companies and the gas programme of the Federal government to improve power supply.

- Work with the private sector to support gas processing in the Ukwu oil and gas belt for energy supply.

- Introduce use of technology to regulate and monitor activities of miners.

Establish a technology institute with world class equipment, resources and ambience with the capacity to train about 10,000 youths annually.

- Build a world class film village close to Nsulu Games village in Isialangwa North.

- Provide free education for Abia residents from primary to junior secondary school.

- provide support for students from vulnerable backgrounds

- Create Abia health Insurance Scheme.

- Restructure and fully fund the Abia State Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA).

- Ensure the clearing of all blocked drainages in Aba and Umuahia to reduce flooding.

Why I Was Very Sure Labour Party Would Take Over Abia Gov. From PDP – Igara

By Faith Ukanwa

Comrade Ceekay Igara is the Chairman of Labour Party in Abia State and doubles as the chairman of the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), in the state. In this interview with Faith Ukanwa, he dives into the history of the Labour Party which defeated the Peoples Democratic Party in the last governorship election in the state, and why he was confident that he party was going to take over the leadership of Abia State from the PDP after a 24-year reign.

Can We Meet You Sir?

My name is Comrade Ceekay Igara. I am from Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State. By God's grace, I am the chairman of the Labour Party in Abia State. I'm also the chairman of the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Abia State. I was also recently appointed the Chairman of all the 36 states chairmen of Labour Party.

How long you have been in the Labour Party, and how were you able to pilot it to where it is at present in the state?

I want to thank you for that question, because too many people think that Labour Party just came into existence last year. I recall in 2008, I contested for the chairmanship of Ohafia Local Government, under the New Democratic Party (NDP). I was the National Organizing Secretary of NDP; I was also the Secretary of Babangida Campaign Organization as well as World Organizational Security Coalition.

Then it was after that election that by 2009, somebody called Pastor Kingsley Uluocha went to Chief Dan Nwanyanwu, because Uluocha was planning to run for governor of Abia State. According to what I was told, he said that he had followed our trajectory and had seen one young man who believed in principles and did not believe in money politics but believed that the right person should be there. So that's what he told them at the national level, so the national chairman then mandated Callistus Okafor who was the South-East chairman to look for me wherever I was. They missed me in Abuja and Cross River because I was hardly in one place due to so many journeys I embarked on. It was at the



Ceekay Igara

Modetel Hotel, Owerri, the Imo State capital that they found me; that was in 2009.

They told me that Uluocha said unless I joined the Labour Party, he would not run for governorship, so because they wanted him to run for the position, that I should please join. I gave them one simple condition; and it was that they should come and pay for an office here, and then allow me to set up a structure in the entire south west. They gladly obliged me. So I had to setup Labour Party in Abia State as well as the chapters in Imo, Anambra, Ebonyi and rest of the South East in 2009. I set up those structures, and we continued from there. And from that time, the only money that I received was the N300,000 naira that was paid as rent for the state office of the party. I started taking care of the party with the little resources I had. So we continued. Uluocha had no money, but I was working with somebody who had principle, who wanted to do something good, until when Stanley Ohajuruka came in, he was the speaker then. He came in and hijacked the entire structure. I said no, you can't do that because people like us are here. So we started fighting, we went to court. I told him no, you can't be the governor. If you wanted to be the governor, let us do it through the due process. So we started going to court, at the end of the day, he lost and ran away. So I continued, we continued nurturing the party, doing the much we could, as far

as our capacity and ability could carry, we continued and sustained it. There was nobody who gave us funds, until money started coming just this season, when Dr. Alex Otti came.

Q

You've been in Labour Party since 2008, and you've been consistent without defecting to any other party, why?

I have this conviction that it is the hand that makes things work. Even in the PDP, APC, APGA; somebody started and nurtured them to where they are right now. And there are some people who create the environment for others to succeed. I want to believe I have such capacity. I want to believe I'm not a 'follow-follow person.' I'm somebody who follows my conviction.

So, I believe that Labour Party is a party for the social government, even for people who belong to all classes. I felt it was very necessary for me to give in my best to see to the success. And that I want to thank God that we've succeeded.

Secondly, everyone knows how God talks to them; I had the privilege of knowing that Labour Party was going to be used. This story is a story I cannot go deeper in now. There are certain things I cannot say right now, because I want to believe it's not yet time for me to say them. But I know that God told me to remain in Labour Party. That was why all the offers to join the PDP, and be this in PDP or that in other parties were shunned. This is because I had a direction which was to build a system that can help us deliver this state. So we continued up until now. And I want to believe it hasn't been too good, neither has it been too badly.

Q

What were your experiences in the recently concluded elections?

It was more like anxiety driven. Mind you, we were experimenting with the BVAS. This is the first time the BVAS was being used in a general election and nobody was sure of the outcome. Personally, as a leader of the Labour Party, I was not so sure of what the BVAS was going to give to offer us; I was also not sure of what INEC was going to do. So that, to a large extent raised my anxiety. During the collation

I was monitoring the systems even though our candidate, now Governor-elect, Dr Alex had nominated Mr Acho Obioma (Chomen), there were some systems that would have given us what they wanted. I was very conscious of monitoring them. That was why most of the party chairmen ran to me with everything. However, I was full of optimism, why? I was sure Labour Party was going to win. I made the announcement in 2015 if you recall, there was a time I made that announcement, I even went to government house to say that after this present government, Labour Party was coming.

Yes, you had convincingly predicted that Labour party was going to win.

No, no, no. that was not a prediction, I was so sure that Labour party was going to win the election.

So what was your conviction?

That's what I said; there is a way God talks to each of us. I was quite sure that we were going to win, so that was why I was making sure that it's going to be the right person that will get the ticket.

So are you saying that it was God who told you?

Of course, yes!

What did he tell you?

He told me that after Okeize Ikpeazu, the Labour Party was going to take over Abia State.

And you believed that?

Of course, yes, I did, because too many things had happened before then. Even when my wife died, God told me; "I am taking her so that you can concentrate on what I want you to do."

So that was why I gladly held my wife's hand and prayed for her and said, God, if there is nothing, because of this, let this woman rest in peace. My wife said AMEN and that night she transited. So that is why I announced that day and said, if I don't have any other person who has gone to heaven, I am sure my wife has gone to heaven. Why I'm saying this is because I was so sure we were going to make it with Labour Party.

What differences would the Labour Party be making in the state?

Labour party is bringing meritocracy into the system. It's a merit based

continue on page 25



CONGRATULATORY *Message*

You came prepared with the right mentality, energy, strength and resources.

This is our chance to do it differently and positively.

Abia will be great with you, God on our sides.

Congratulations my Brother, Friend and His Excellency, Alex Otti, OFR.

DR. ALEX OTTI
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE



CHIEF INEM NWAKA
ENYIOHA OF ABIRIBA



Congratulations His Excellency

DR. ALEX OTTI GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE

The battle to deliver Abia State was a collective one.

As a candidate in that election, I was the first to insist that INEC must declare you as winner and God made it to come to pass.

I insisted because the people have spoken in a transparent democratic way and I also insisted because I am sure you have all it takes to deliver on that mandate.

The expectation from ndi Abia is very high, but with your track record I believe you will exceed that expectation.

As you take up the mantle of leadership today, I pray that God will fill you up with wisdom, knowledge and humility that will enable you be a true leader.

May God bless Abia State and make the emergency of the new Abia a reality through you.



AMBASSADOR CHIJOKE OKORO

(DIKE OHA I)

Abia State Action Alliance (AA)
2023 Governorship Candidate

Why I Was Very Sure Labour Party Would Take Over Abia State Government. From PDP – *Igara*

from page 22

system we're going to run.

Two, we are conscious of the fact that there is serious rot into the system, so with that consciousness, we are approaching governance. We are trying to clear the debris; clear the mess, lay the foundations, and build up these foundations. So, Labour Party, like I mentioned earlier are social democrats; these are people who are already suffering. And we are in a hurry to bring palliatives. I don't know how long you've moved round Aba when it rains.

The other day, our governor elect, during the transition committee inauguration, said; "you are free to move around Aba, but if you want to move around Aba, make sure you wear your rainboots." He was making a rhetorical statement that not many of us understood. And of a truth, assuming we had built Aba, created all the drainages, by now, Aba should have been something different from what it is right now. The governor-elect said he is going to create the ministry for Aba alone. What's the reason? What's the rationale? So that Aba will be given the right concentration, the right attention that it deserves. I tell you, if you fix Aba, you have fixed Abia.

So what does Abia really need to be fixed?

Give us infrastructure, good roads, electricity, some many other things that will make life a little easier. These are the infrastructures. When all these things are done, you pay workers' salary. When you pay workers' salary, whether you borrow or not, that money will go back to the society and to the system. And it is the exchange of money that engineers activities within the system. Interestingly, that's what brings back taxes to the government. So when you withhold the resources, when you don't pay workers' salary, you are crippling the government and for people to lend you money, they will monitor the activities within the system. Mind you, even the banks, before you apply for a loan, they will see your turn over rate. Some people may not even have seen N20 million yet go to apply for N50 million. In such scenario the banks would simply decline such request. So, we are coming, that's why our government would be different. Our governor-elect, Dr Alex Otti, has already spoken. We're

going to have a very small government; merit based government, however, there is still going to be patronages for those who worked with us, it's obvious it will certainly come. But the A team must be merit-based so that people would have confidence within the system again. There is no confidence in the leadership of all the states. There's no confidence anymore. So we want to use this to bring back the confidence of the people. Let people trust government. That is what we want to bring back to the government.

How well do you trust Dr Alex Otti to deliver all the promises he made to Abians?

Dr. Alex Otti is an individual; now his government is everybody. It is our responsibility to always remind him as

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When you pay workers' salary, whether you borrow or not, that money will go back to the society and to the system. And it is the exchange of money that engineers activities within the system.

a government; 'Your Excellency, when you went to Obingwa, you promised to do this; we're just bringing it to your notice.' We need to be reminding him. We also don't need to bother him so much with demands. Why people fail is when people keep demanding, brothers and sisters, friends and in-laws. Everybody, coming to those in authority, asking for one favour or the other, even when you know you that you don't merit it. Such things, I want to believe, may not be seen in our government. Yes, we will reach everybody. If the roads are fine, the hospitals are working, the electricity is fixed and the other amenities can reach everybody, I think we should be more comfortable with that, and the economy is booming, if this is achieved under this leadership, I think we've done very well.

Are you not scared of Alex Otti failing; because of the many expectations Abians have placed on

him?

Well, I'm not scared. He is not a magician, he is not God. If you recall, during my last interface with the press, I said Abians should pray for him, because I know, it's only God that gives wisdom. God can engender a lot of activities within an environment to make him succeed while he is passionate about what he is going to do. So, as far as I'm concerned, I am not afraid if he will fail because failure, like I said to him is not an option.

I'm very sure he will succeed, and we will help him succeed – both the party and Abians. Like I told you, he made it clear during the transition committee inauguration that he was coming here to work for everyone – APC, PDP, Labour and Abians as a whole. Because of his kind of person, he will like to entrench a degree of unity, create that kind of synergy, that kind of atmosphere, so that those in YPP, PDP will not see him as being antagonistic. But that does not mean that we're going to take any of those people who ruined this state. What we're going to look at is; you have capacity and ability to deliver. We look at capacity, competence, principles and also experience. Those are some of the things we have, that are able to guide our decision in terms of selecting. I'm sure he is aware of this.

What is the level of defection into Labour Party at the moment and how have you been managing it?

Even today, I've received several people here, who want to defect or who have already defected. But the only parameter is that, the party said "hold on, on registration of new membership, let's manage the old people. But I'm sure before May 29, we will open the books again for registration. One thing we don't want to encourage is the situation where the good, the bad and the ugly, all will gather here, and as they ruined APC, as they also mismanaged PDP and other parties, they will not come here and mismanage Labour Party. That is the reason why the governor elect, is conscious of that development. When we made this call he knew it was in good fate. He is somebody who respects hierarchy.

Your last words to Abians

Abians, I want to thank you once again, for electing us, for giving us your trust and this mandate. I know it hasn't been



Ceekay Igara

easy with us as Abians. We don't have basic infrastructures, we don't have basic amenities, if you go to other states, there are some few things you see, and when you see them, you come here you don't see them, you get angry. I want to thank you for your degree of patience, I also want to thank you for the confidence you have in Dr Alex Otti and the Labour Party. I assure you today, that we will never let you down. And all your Labour will not be in vain. Dr Alex Otti's government is going to work for our political goodwill.

His government is going to uplift the standard of living of our people here. For us as a party, we're here to give him all the necessary support he needs, to make sure he delivers and succeeds. But I want to also ask us, let us lower our expectations, because we are coming to rebuild a foundation that has been destroyed. And we're also going to be very strict, in order that we can conserve some money, before we start building the idea. There are too many things we're going to do. We're going to be too restrictive now, because we need to gather some funds in order to pay. We have promised that we're going to pay all arrears before December. That one will, to a large extent, give our economy, a serious boost. Once that is done, every other thing will fall in place, therefore, I encourage you to continue to pray for us, continue to support us. Don't belong to the group that wants to pull everybody down.

Dr. Alex is our governor now, if you continue to pull him down, you will distract him. He may not concentrate to do anything. And I'm pleading with Abians to encourage their parents, brothers, fathers, mothers, in-laws, those who want to go to court for unnecessary things, let them, as a matter of interest, think twice before they engage in this massive distraction they're going to create, which will ultimately, hinder what we're going to do. But I think, with their prayers, support Abians have come to experience a new paradise.

How Abia State IGR Grew From N15.9bn In 2020 To N20.1bn In 2022

Abia State's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) grew from N15.9 billion in 2020 to N20.1 billion in 2022. This is according to the chairman, Abia State Board of Internal Revenue (BIR), Mr Chijioke Okoronka. In this exclusive interview with Emenike Iroegbu, Okoronka gives an insight into how the Board was able to raise the state's IGR which was pegged at N15 billion per annum in 2020 to N19,578,331,591.33 billion in 2021, a full year of private sector involvement, and progressed to N20,108,232,055.98 billion in 2022 with a target of hitting N24 billion in 2023.



Chijioke Okoronka

READ FULL INTERVIEW:

Q. You're at helm of affairs in the revenue drive of Abia State, let's have a view of how Abia State Board of Internal Revenue in your care is fairing with its mandate to raise IGR.

Abia State Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) is doing well under my watch. We have had challenges, but equally we have had gains and our gains can be seen from the growth of the state IGR.

The private sector driven approach, combined with civil service administration has made the state experience progressive growth in our IGR drive. This is a state that was pegged at N15bn as at 2020, but within a year of the active involvement of the private sector with the collaboration of the civil service our IGR grew to above N19bn.

By the things that are happening and given the necessary environment and support, we intend to grow it to more than 2 billion per month which gives over 24 billion in 2023. What has anticipated so much to this progress we have done is more of the injection of the private sector driven approach, not just the civil service way; the civil servants are the administrative people that knows what to do, But with the private sector driven approach, there were innovations, there were changes, there were injections of the modern system of doing things that propelled the achievement that we made. the introduction of ICT, more especially, in the informal sector, like the transport sector, where the E-ticket moved from manual ticketing, in fact it fizzled out paper tickets and became E-ticketing which increased the state's revenue by more than 1500% from less than 100million yearly to over 1 billion naira gross, monthly.

Abia state became the first state to launch and implement it and it was so good and it expanded from just the

keke (tricycle), the transport sector to every part of that transport sector to markets whereby the flyer revenue is driven with E-ticketing platform which is a wonderful innovation because that saw the state moving our revenue from less than a hundred million to over three hundred million in the market sector which is a very radical increase. Other technologies were introduced such as the demand notice tracker, which enables us track demand notice distributions with informed enforcement. The demand notice tracker over the last 2 years have seen to the distribution of over 300 thousand demand notices that are geo-tagged, which made our enforcement process more data drive. In fact these innovations have formed an integral part of our operations here in the BIR and have created more than 1000 jobs for people. We have over 700 ticketers and 300 enforcers, agents, and even casual workers in the field what work collaboratively to realize the steady growth we're currently having in Abia State.

The increase in these sectors has been steady. I told the governor (Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu) how we needed to fine-tune it

“The increase in these sectors has been steady. I told the governor (Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu) how we needed to fine-tune it the more and expand it because, it reduced faking, it reduced compromise, it reduced a lot of challenges we were having with paper ticketing

the more and expand it because, it reduced faking, it reduced compromise, it reduced a lot of challenges we were having with paper ticketing and all that. with e-ticketing, every keke (tricycle), every bus, every vehicle is tied to its number plate for enforcement and that helped in checkmating faking and others, and like I said, the e-ticketing was so good in that, you cannot duplicate it. At the end of every 24 hours, the tickets are regenerated, the old ones go, and new ones come up. So, that has really helped the state to manage that area that was so volatile and crisis ridden. But today, we are doing so fine that even at the national level, the Joint Tax Board, has copied what Abia has done. Not only in that area, it's also helping us in enumeration. It enlarges the tax net, brings more new people and more taxpayers as it makes the system to increase the number of people who should pay tax and those who should pay other revenues.

In terms of enumeration, it increases it because it's ICT-driven; and I must confess that the private sector that brought the ICT operation changed most things that were done manually and that increased the efficiency of operations.

Q. Speculations out there suggest that the Abia IGR has never grown beyond 16 billion naira. In specific terms, what are the actual figures on both monthly and yearly basis?

Like I said, from 2021, we started firstly, by harmonizing all collections. Revenue comes from different windows, by that; it means you have those that are from Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) from the employee sector. You have those that come from the motor licensing section, which is flying revenue and motor vehicle administration. You also have those that are generated by different MDAs with the mandate to generate revenues. But what internal revenue does is to collect and account to the government. So, the work of the ministry is still there. So, like I said earlier on, there was an increase, though slight increase then from 15 billion in to 19.5 billion in 2021, and above 20 billion in 2022, and as we speak, for the first quarter, we've done over 6 billion already. But there are still other revenue windows that have not been brought into the figures that we have for the current year. By the time we get them together, we'll be netting over 7 billion on average for the first quarter. Going by that, you'll be talking about over 24 billion naira, which is the base we're looking at for 2023.

But by the time we factor in all the

revenues, you'll be talking about over 24-25 billion naira, which is above two billion per-month average. But our initial target is to make three billion per month. It's achievable if the technology and human resources and willpower are there to drive it. And that is why the private sector driven approach is very necessary. Doing away with restrictive bureaucracy and getting things done the way they should be done, I think, is an achievable thing for us to make a minimum of three billion naira in a month – more especially in those areas that have been established, the flying revenue, the e-ticketing, the one-serve platform which the state also owns and have seen all ministries keying into, to on-board all their revenue heads for seamless collection. So that all the areas that people have been cutting corners would be blocked while government revenue increases as MDAs get what's due to them for smooth running of their affairs. We're putting measures on ground to make sure the MDAs key in and do what necessary; then, we'll do marvellous things in the state.

Q. What is the compliant quotient of Abia taxpayers? On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate Abians with respect to tax compliance?

Yeah, with publicity, creation of awareness and enforcement; people have seen how necessary it is for them to do their civic obligations. They have seen also, that taxpayer money is being put to use. For instance, if you go to Aba, you'll discover that some areas now wear a different look from what they used to be. It's like what was happening in Lagos when Fawler would always tell Lagosians "this is taxpayer's money at work," that's exactly what is happening here. So, the more you are producing, people are seeing it, they are voluntarily complying. Before now, it was a difficult task for people to pay; but now they've seen the reason why they should pay because they're seeing it at work, two, we have been able to clamp down reasonably on illegal collectors. With the help of enforcement team, we have reduced it by over 70, 80 per cent. It is just a few people here and there, that we are still tracking down to make sure that whatever is paid gets into the government coffers and the people get the dividend of that payment. So, I think that people are willingly now complying more than ever before, the voluntary compliance is on the increase.

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DR. ALEX OTTI
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE

ENGR IKECHUKWU EMETU
DEPUTY GOVERNOR ABIA STATE

Goodwill Message

As you finally take up the Abia State Pilot seat today, always remember that Abians are your passengers and they will rely on you to take them to the new Abia.

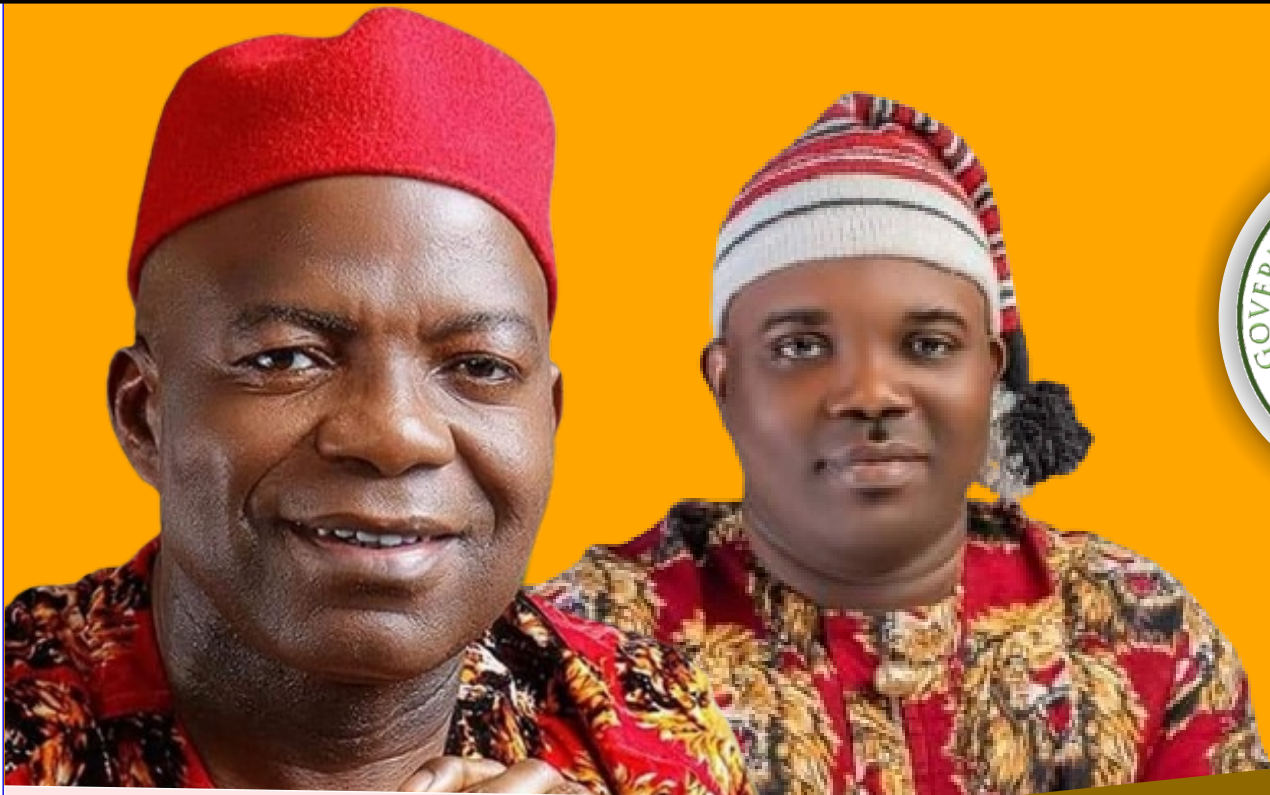
The new Abia where infrastructures will be topnotch, where health workers will no longer go on strike, where education will be great, where salaries and pensions will be paid as at when due, where security will be guaranteed and where the business environment will boom.

As an Umuasua man that have experienced your impact through the road infrastructure, I believe you have all it takes to deliver on this great assignment.

I wish you well all through your tenure. God bless you.

Emmanuel Peters
Political Stakeholder
From Isuikwuato Local Government Area





DR. ALEX OTTI OFR & **ENGR. IKECHUKWU EMETU**
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE DEPUTY GOVERNOR ABIA STATE

Felicitations

Join Family Members, Friends, Associates and all the good people of Abia State in Congratulating Your Excellency, DR. ALEX CHIOMA OTTI (OFR) on your Inauguration as the 10th Governor of Abia State, holding on May 29, 2023. By the Honorable Chief Justice of Abia State, The Honorable Justice Lilian Abai.

Your historic election victory is an indication that the people have reposed so much confidence in you. Indeed, it is a perfect realisation of a people's longstanding wish and desire.

The great joy that pervaded the entire atmosphere across the State and Nigeria in general, shows that your track record of performance in all your stewardship, are evident and I have no doubt that you would perform excellently as Governor.

Given your antecedents as an accomplished Technocrat and Banker, I know you have the Competence, Capacity, Character and Wisdom to

Steer Abia State to the next level of development.

Your emergence is a major pointer that Politics today is tilting towards Meritocracy and not god-fatherism.

Once again, Congratulations Big brother and thank you for your Tenacity, Steadfastness and Consistent Courage.

Wishing you well through your tenure.

Chief & Lolo Aliche Oti ▶





DR. ALEX OTTI OFR & **ENGR. IKECHUKWU EMETU**
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE DEPUTY GOVERNOR ABIA STATE

Goodwill Message

Your emergency has rekindled the hope of a new Abia, where women, children, physically challenged and the less privilege will be accommodated and given the right of place.

These set of people have prayed, fasted and some that are qualified amongst them equally trouped out to vote for you.

The less privileged have gone through a lot in Abia State, but we believe your government will initiate policies and plans that will enable them enjoy the dividends of democracy as it is done in other states.

As an advocate for the less privileged, I urge you to give

priority towards the protection of these vulnerable groups.

I wish you a wonderful tenure as Governor and I pray you accomplish more than you envisioned.

Hon. Favour Chiemerie Nzeanochie
United Kingdom Barrister at Law
ADC House of Representative Candidate for
Isuikwuato/Umunneochi Fed. Const. 2023



How Abia State IGR Grew From N15.9bn In 2020 To N20.1bn In 2022

from page 26

Q

You talked about the innovations that the application of technology brought into this system, to a layman, this may not easily be understood. What practically different did your agency do from the usual ways of doing things, to achieve this?

An eye opener was just the election period when the government implemented the cashless policy. It was as if it was an impossible task, people now discovered that there are other means of payments and carrying out transactions without touching cash. First of all, we had a law that made it an offense for you to pay cash. So whatever is payable, is paid through the bank, and it's an automatic thing. If you pay, it's verifiable. If you don't pay, it is also clear that it's not paid. So with the ICT, we had to establish the central system, and also the Abia One-serve system and other integration processes that made payments, assessments, and confirmation very seamless so that if you pay it is easy for you to get a confirmation of payment, it is also easy for us to prove that you paid, reconciliations are also very seamless. Moreover, there was this introduction of an easy payment method known as "pay small small" to lessen the burden of payment whereby the taxpayer has the option of paying as little as he can every day. So that also helped the taxpayers to key into the campaign very well. We have also leveraged the use of Point of Sale (POS), Afriipay and other payment channels close to the taxpayer to make payment of taxes easier. It's also easier now for companies to transfer their payments and confirm same through the Abia Oneserve. So this time around, it has reduced fraud to the extent that these things are traceable and very clear; whether they have been paid or not. So technology has really helped just like the banking sector, today, we're moving gradually from ATM to Apps and others, so also we're moving gradually to make it seamless and easier for payments and other operations so that the taxpayer can conveniently pay.

Technology has really helped us and enabled the state to establish both the central system, the Oneserve architecture that has also given a holistic approach to entering the state business environment. You know what you can do in the state, and once you enter it, you get your Abia State Social Identification Number (ABSSIN). This will also guide you in every operation within the state. It's now connected within all the MDAs, so that whatever you're doing here

will also be viewed by the entire state. So, the technology has done so well. And we are improving on them, you know, it's not really easy getting people to key into such changes, but we are gradually moving at a faster rate. People are buying into it, people are seeing the need for it because they've seen results like the MDAs that have also come on board, are today happy because as their revenue generation is increasing, they're also getting increase in what they are supposed to use in running the office. So they are now working to do more, the more they do the state gets more, that is the result of the ICT.

Q

How much did Aba contribute to the N6 billion generated in the first quarter? Also, we've heard about complaints from the government over unprofitable MDAS and parastatals; how much is their contribution to this process?

First of all, Abia is the home of SMEs. In Nigeria, it's rated as one of the states leading majorly in small-scale industries –and by the enumeration we have done, we have gotten so much into our tax net and are also doing more. By our estimation, there are over 100,000 shops in all the markets in Aba, and we're also looking at an average of over 100,000 business outfits. Going by that, we realise over 2 billion naira annually in each of these areas. With the private sector approach, we are getting everybody into the tax net and that is a wonderful one. So because of this shop renovation and other things in Aba, we're looking at, earning over 2.3 billion from the market as long as things go the way we have planned them, then from the e-ticketing section of transportation, we're also looking at over half a billion, then we

are also looking at signage; signage should be something above some millions getting to more than half a 100 million, that is Over 60 million per annum. Then, on that of the parastatals, it has been a difficult task keying them in. Even when the governor had given directives, most of them have not adhered, but those that have keyed in have testified of the benefits and others are now changing their minds. Others are now keying in, because we know that there is no MDA that is not lucrative, they are. It's only, like we said, the private sector approach to issues; no longer staying at home to receive alerts without doing anything. If you are productive, at the end of the day, you get reward for your work. So those things are changing. Most of those parastatals, we are encouraging them and we're bringing them in to do what they're supposed to do so that their own sector will be productive also, once it does, and there'll be enough also for them to run the system. So we are encouraging them to do the needful.

Q

What should Abians be expecting more from this particular agency as regards idea?

Yes, like I told you that tax or revenue is what makes government to run a system, to carry out projects, to do things for the people. So once we get Abians to pay what they're supposed to pay, as it's coming, it will make the government to do what they're supposed to do for them; providing the necessary amenities and facilities that would also lubricate the system for good operation of businesses. Once they pay and government continues to see that the system will continue to grow. Just like you can stay in your home and log into the

website of the Federal Road Safety Corps to process your driver's license without having to interact with any person, such is what we are now putting in place. We believe that as we go on, those things will materialise. So far some have started operation, like the architecture we are fine-tuning to get the best of it, it will be so robust, that at the comfort of your home, you can do anything and interact with the state government. Just currently, people overseas can stay at the comfort of their homes and get tax clearance; e-taxing certificates etc. from Abia State. You can get assessed; you can get ABSSIN from the comfort of your home. You can get assessment from there, you can pay online and there and then, it will generate e-TCC for you. We have that in place but are only trying to educate people to use them.

We're looking forward to working with the incoming governor also, who will carry on with the project that is already on ground, because as the growth is going with political will and support, we'll be able to achieve the result that we are looking forward to.

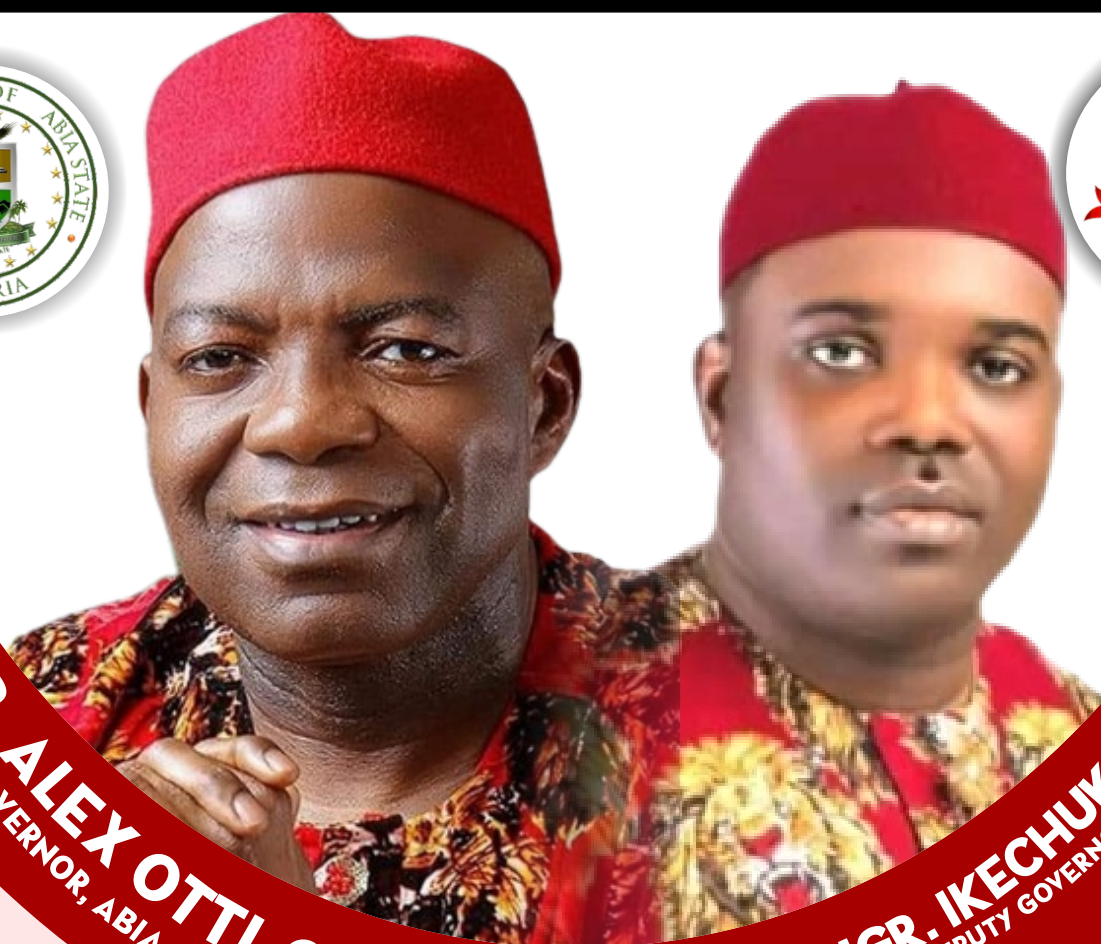
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Does the agency have a monthly or a quarterly publication of what comes into the ministry?

Yes, I think the design will have those things in place, so that people can go in, just like the creation of the Oneserve, you can launch in and look at what the system has for you in terms of transactions, businesses and everything and also look at what has been on ground, because records speak for themselves. So there are websites, BIR websites, we have Abia website where you can source out these things.

Abia IGR Growth LEVEL/Projection (Bn)





DR. ALEX OTTI OFR
GOVERNOR, ABIA STATE

ENGR. IKECHUKWU EMETU
DEPUTY GOVERNOR ABIA STATE

Goodwill Message

On behalf of my family, I am happy to extend congratulations for your monumental victory at the 2023 General elections and my best wishes and felicitations on the occasion of your swearing in as the governor of Abia State.

As you prepare to take up the responsibilities and challenges of your exalted office, I have no doubt in my mind that you are fully poised to unleash your intellectual capacities and bulk of experiences to bring about a significant transformation in the socio-economic and overall development of Abia State.

I am thankful to God for granting the age-long yearnings of Abia people for goal-oriented leaders like you who have the interest of the people and the state at

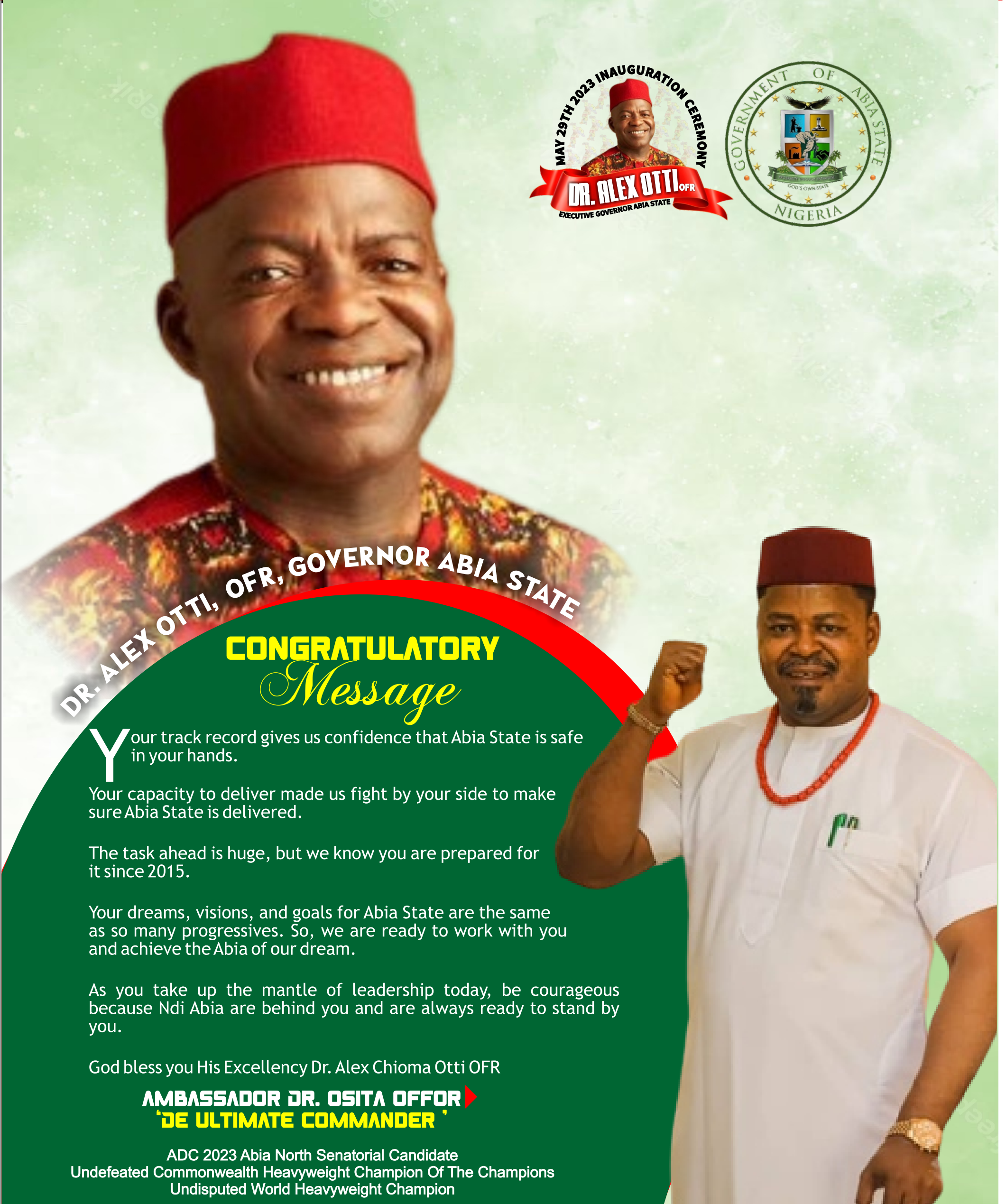
heart.

May God continue to keep you in good health as you boldly control the responsibilities of your new office so that our community and Abia State, in general, will truly benefit from the new Abia.

Congratulations



Dr. Barr. Okwun Ojah
(OGBANKPU OHAFIA)



DR. ALEX OTTI, OFR, GOVERNOR ABIA STATE

CONGRATULATORY *Message*

Your track record gives us confidence that Abia State is safe in your hands.

Your capacity to deliver made us fight by your side to make sure Abia State is delivered.

The task ahead is huge, but we know you are prepared for it since 2015.

Your dreams, visions, and goals for Abia State are the same as so many progressives. So, we are ready to work with you and achieve the Abia of our dream.

As you take up the mantle of leadership today, be courageous because Ndi Abia are behind you and are always ready to stand by you.

God bless you His Excellency Dr. Alex Chioma Otti OFR

AMBASSADOR DR. OSITA OFFOR
'DE ULTIMATE COMMANDER'

ADC 2023 Abia North Senatorial Candidate
Undefeated Commonwealth Heavyweight Champion Of The Champions
Undisputed World Heavyweight Champion