

**Murphy's Mansion Resorts**  
 Amafor Isingwu War Museum Rd  
 (Beside National War Museum)  
 Umuahia, Abia State  
 08033242549

**Nigeria's governance cost: Can Alex Otti help?**  
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**Abia residents can't afford sit at home**  
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## Okpara deserves National recognition — Ofoegbu

By Okereke Kate

Federal and state governments, particularly the South Eastern part of the country have been tasked to expedite actions to ensure that the late Premier of the then Eastern Nigerian, Dr Michael Okpara be given a National recognition.

In a chat with our reporter, a member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), in Abia State and 2023 House of Assembly aspirant, Chief Raymond Ofoegbu (Onyinye ohuhu), said that while past leaders of the late M.I Okpara's status across Nigeria, have all been recognised, the late Dr Okpara is yet to receive any national honour.

He said the like of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, among other past leaders, have since received one form of recognition or the other from the federal government, with some federal establishments named after them, whereas in the case of late Dr M.I Okpara, none has been given to him.

According to him, the late Premier has been continuously disrespected in the programmes and activities of the present day democracy in Nigeria, whereas, leaders from the other divide, have continuously received honours for their countless contributions and sacrifices made to reposition the economy of the nation.

Ofoegbu further stated that, "Nothing could be said to identify the landmark of this hero who lived and fulfilled our collective dreams with remarkable history to behold by generations yet unborn.

"No one among the leaders in the five states of the Eastern Nigeria, that has represented the great Okpara. Not even a close attempt by the Ebonyi State Governor, David Umahi, who refused to revive the Nkalagu Cement Industry, maybe with the question of 'Who would it be named after'.

Recounting some of the laudable achievements made by the late Okpara, High Chief Ofoegbu, said his projects in the Agro-Allied industries, which have gone moribund, should be revived to meet the exact reason it was set up, bringing to bare the line of the National Anthem that says, 'The labour of our heroes past, shall never be in vain'.

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■ Abia state Governor, Dr Alex Otti flanked by the National Security Adviser, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu addressing journalists in Abuja after a meeting between the South-East governors and NSA on the security situation in the region.

## Abia to liaise with Ebonyi to settle boundary dispute

By Charles Ogbonnaya

To ensure the proper mapping and delineation of the boundary between the Ugwueke Community of Bende Council and their Akaeze neighbours of Ebonyi State, Abia State Deputy Governor, Chief Ikechukwu Emetu has revealed that government is working out modalities to liaise with the Ebonyi and the National Boundary Commission on boundary delineation.

Emetu who stated this

during a courtesy visit by the Ugwueke Community, at Government House, Umuahia, disclosed that the Abia Technical Team will be in Abuja within the next two weeks, to interface with the Commission's Technical Team handling the Abia and Akwa Ibom State boundary issues and in extension also look into the Abia and Ebonyi State boundary skirmishes.

The deputy governor promised to further liaise with his Ebonyi State counterpart in a week's time to restrain the

Akaeze youths from encroaching on the Ugwueke land and stop the destruction of agricultural crops, pending the resolution of the crisis by the NBC, in addition to ensuring that there is security presence in contentious areas.

He reiterated that the Dr Alex Otti's administration was determined not only to ensure peaceful coexistence between Abia and their sister States sharing boundaries with them as according to him, the era of communities

having boundary issues with each other is no longer acceptable.

Emetu who is also the Chairman, Abia State Boundary Committee assured that government would not shy away from doing everything within its power to bring lasting solutions to all the boundary disputes confronting the state and thanked the traditional rulers of Ugwueke for the restraint and wisdom they have so far exhibited in keeping peace in their various domains.

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Abia to liaise with Ebonyi to settle boundary dispute

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Presenting an address on behalf of the Ugwueke Development Union and Traditional Rulers, the Vice President, Chief Mike Ogwo said they came to officially inform government of the persistent boundary disputes between their community and their Akaeze neighbours of Ebonyi State which had led to incessant attacks and destruction of their agricultural crops despite peace efforts initiated by their Traditional Rulers and previous government of both States.

Contributing also, the Traditional Ruler of Amokai Ugwueke autonomous community, Eze Gilbert Chukwu who congratulated Governor Alex Otti and his Deputy, Ikechukwu Emetu on their resounding victory as well as commended them for proving that they have enough capacity to ensure the enthronement of good governance for the development of the State, appealed to government to urgently come to their rescue in providing lasting solution to their boundary problems.

Okpara deserves national recognition - Ofoegbu

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"The late Dr M.I.Okpara deserves at least commissioner positions from the five states of the Eastern Nigeria he led, he deserves to be honoured through reviving all the roads named after him to become Okpara roads", Ofoegbu explains.

He, however, alleged that the government of Dr Alex Otti, might be victimizing the people of Ohuhu clan in Umuahia North Local Government Area, because they supported their brother, the APC governorship candidate, High Chief Ikechi Emenike, over him (Otti).

"Ohuhu may have been neglected by Governor Alex Otti, simply because, Ohuhu opted for APC during the last election going by the facts of our brother's aspiration for governorship. Elections have come and gone, though activities of the election are still on going, either directly or indirectly.

"Appreciation for a job well done in terms of inclusion in government

while it's been formed, could create a sense of recognition and opportunity to show those sterling attributes that made us a peculiar people of Ohuhu ndi huru. Nothing could be said to identify the landmark of this hero who lived and fulfilled our collective dreams with remarkable history to behold by generations yet unborn".

High Chief Ofoegbu, also posited that posterity would be kind to any leader who rewards the hardwork of his predecessors, saying that leaders of tomorrow, would only remember you and treat you well, if you had treated well past leaders who contributed to the growth and development of your today.

However, Ofoegbu, suggested that History should be made as a compulsory subject/course, from the elementary level to the University, so as to properly educate and inform the younger generation of past occurrences.

Erondu commends House of Reps for supporting Abia House Resolution

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru and Stephanie Adindu

The member representing Obingwa-West state constituency in Abia State House of Assembly (ABHA), Hon. Erondu Uchenna Erondu Jnr, has commended the House of Representatives, Abuja, for honouring the plea from ABHA resolution to suspend the proposed electricity tariff increment earlier billed to start by July 1, 2023, as moved by him (Hon. Erondu Jnr).

Erondu Jnr, who disclosed this with newsmen in Umuahia, Abia State, maintained that Nigerians are neck-deep into untold hardship with no end in sight, thanked Federal lawmakers for timely responding to people's-oriented plea from ABHA.

The House of Representatives at plenary on July 20, 2023, called on the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) to put a stop to the planned increase in electricity tariff at the moment.

The House further mandated its Committee on

Power (when constituted) to interface with NERC with a view to finding a common ground to addressing the proposed hike in the interest of Nigerians.

The resolution followed a motion moved by the Deputy Minority Whip, Hon. Aliyu Madaki, who expressed concerns over the suspense created by the planned increase in electricity tariff by Distribution Companies (DISCOs).

The lawmaker recalled that the DISCOs recently alerted customers of a planned electricity tariff hike hinged on the Multi-Year Tariff Order (MYTO), citing a circular issued to that effect by the distribution firms, stating that effective July 1, 2023, there would be an upward review of the electricity tariff influenced by fluctuating rates.

According to him, "Under the MYTO, 2022 guidelines, the previous exchange rate of N 441/\$1 may be revised to approximately N750/\$1 which would have an impact on the tariffs associated with electricity consumption".

He pointed out that under the planned hike, consumers within 'B' and 'C' with supply hours ranging from 12-16 hours per day will pay N100 per KWh, while Bands 'A' with

20 hours and above and 'B' with 16-20 hours, would experience comparatively higher tariffs, that is, for customers with a prepaid metre, whereas, for those on post-paid (estimated) billing, a significant increment is expected to be higher.

"The proposed increase is coming despite the inability of the operators to meet the threshold of supplying at least 5,000 megawatts per year after signing the contract with the National Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC)", he argued, stressing that "it is most inappropriate and insensitive to come up with a price increase of such magnitude at this time when many Nigerians are yet to come to terms with the increase in petrol prices".

Recall that Erondu Jnr had moved the first motion of the 8th Abia Assembly on matter of urgent public importance at the plenary of ABHA on 29th June 2023; calling on FG to suspend the newly proposed electricity tariff billed to start on 1st July 2023 until the effect of petroleum subsidy removal is properly absorbed.

Commissioner inaugurates social media team

By Faith Ifeanyichukwu

A Social Media Unit/Team has been formally inaugurated by the Abia State Commissioner for Information and Culture, Prince Okey Kanu.

The information boss said the essence of establishing the Social Media team was to bring to fore the programmes and achievements of Abia state government.

Sir Kanu said that the activities of the team would on

all the social media platforms including; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Threads and Tik-tok.

According to him, the team will be in charge of monitoring posts made concerning the state government, driving the narratives of good governance in Abia State on the social media space, quick authorized response on negative posts made, among others.

During the inauguration, some key points which were highlighted and deliberated upon include: creation and setting up social media handles on all platforms mentioned,

positive content creation, provision of needed ICT facilities to drive media content for better aesthetics such as drones, digital cameras, laptops, etc and engagement of social media Influencers to achieve effective and wider reach and creation of the Ministry's new website.

The commissioner charged the newly inaugurated Media Team to work diligently and be proactive in making sure that this daunting task is achieved.

Lagos bound pregnant women delivers baby

By Okere Ugochinyere and Ekebuisi Precious

It was a moment of excitement and tension as Miss Chiemela Cindy Uchechi; a student of Public Health in Abia State College of Health Sciences and Management Technology (ABSCOHMAT) Aba, helped a young pregnant woman who was on Lagos bound luxury recently of today in Iyana Ipaja, Lagos State.

Fielding questions from our reporter, Miss. Uchechi, noted

that the whole drama started when they spotted the woman having labour signs while on transit and there was no health facility in sight to take her to.

She added that the woman was seriously in need of medical attention and being a Public Health Student, who had her Industrial Attachment in a maternity, had to forcefully resume duty to save lives.

Miss Uchechi said: "This has always been my dream to save people and help them, so when the

opportunity presented itself, I seized it because I have been taught well in school as a health practitioner".

She further stated that it's not by her power but God who used her to help the woman because she was in serious labour in the bus.

"We took her to the hospital afterwards, the mother and the baby boy are doing really well in Lagos", she stated.

Abia Lawmaker appreciates God

By Chukwuemeka Egejuru and Stephanie Adindu

The member representing Ukwa-East State Constituency in Abia State House of Assembly (ABHA), Hon. Lewis Chimaemerem Obianyi, has restated his commitment towards quality representation of the people of Ukwa-East Local Government Area (LGA), Abia state.

The lawmaker who stated this during his thanksgiving service at St. Thomas Anglican Church, Azumini Ndoki, Ukwa-East Local Government Area recently, said he would never toy with the mandate of his people but would use

everything at his disposal to attract dividends of democracy to his constituents.

Fielding questions from newsmen, Hon. Lewis who thanked God for giving him victory at the 2023 general elections, promised that he would not relent until his desire to better the lives of his constituents is achieved.

He also thanked the people of Ukwa-East for their love for him, expressed through their votes at the 2023 polls, adding that they would not regret electing him.

The legislator, who also unveiled the first batch of beneficiaries of his training and empowerment programme, noted that it is one of his humble way of thanking his people for their

confidence in his leadership.

He promised to sustain the programme, adding that improving Human Capital Development in his constituency is his priority.

In his sermon, the Bishop of Ukwa Diocese, Rt. Revd Manesses Chijiokem Okere, commended Hon. Obianyi for mapping out time to thank God for his call to higher service, describing the lawmaker as a humble leader who has regards for God and spiritual authority.

The clergy further noted that God has chosen Obianyi at this time for a purpose, urging his constituents to support him to achieve his good visions and missions to the people of Ukwa-East LGA.

Change of Name

I, formerly known as Rev. (Barr) Precious Uchenna Okereke, now wish to be known and addressed as REV. (BARR.) PRECIOUS UCHENNA ANYANWU. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note. REV. (BARR.) PRECIOUS UCHENNA ANYANWU.

I, formerly known as Miss Chinasa Oko Enyim, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. CHINASA PRECIOUS UCHENNA ANYANWU. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note. MRS. CHINASA PRECIOUS UCHENNA ANYANWU.

I, formerly known as Mary C. Ehumadu, now wish to be known and addressed as MARY CHIGOZIRI NDUBUKA. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public should please take note. MARY CHIGOZIRI NDUBUKA.

I, formerly known as Miss Chioma Crystal Amadi, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS CHIOMA CRYSTAL CHUKWUEMEKANWAGBOSO. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. The general public please takes note. MRS CHIOMA CRYSTAL CHUKWUEMEKA-NWAGBOSO

Correction of Name

This is to affirm that Mgbekwe Chinwobi Grant O. and Chiweobi Grant O. which appeared in all my certificates: West African Examination Council, and in all my higher tertiary education certificate; and Mgbekwe Chimaobi Grant O. are same person. I, now wish to be known and addressed as MGBEKE CHIMA OBI GRANT O. All documents bearing these names remain valid. The general public should please take note. MGBEKE CHIMA OBI GRANT O.

Table with 2 columns: Position and Name. Includes GM/Editor-in-Chief (Jones Nnanna Ike), Editor (Kingsley Ugorji), News Editor (Johnny Okeke), Asst. News Editor (Chukwuemeka Egejuru), Head, Operations Dept. (Ihedinachi Okpara), Head, Commercial Dept. (Mary Ehumadu), Head Computer Section (Okezie Beatrice L), Ag Head, Special Project Unit (Ugochinyere Okere), Ag Head, Sports Desk (Chimchetam Eze), Ag Head, Business Desk (Kelechi Eme-Ogidi), Ag Head, Feminine Desk (Faith Ifeanyichukwu), Ag Head, Proof Reading Desk (Pious Jacob).



## Special Features

# Nigeria's governance cost: Can Alex Otti help?

From *Tonnie Iredia*

**S**ome 3 months ago, general elections were held across Nigeria. On account of the nation's financial predicament and monumental misery in the land, Nigerians are now anxiously awaiting those who emerged victorious in the elections to change the nation for good or at least ameliorate the precarious situation.

For a number of reasons, one new leader that can lead a group of game changers is Alex Chioma Otti, Economist, Banker, Investor and Philanthropist who currently serves as governor of Abia State. Although a few Nigerian leaders have some of Otti's traits, he stands out for shunning the nation's subsisting pedestrian thought process which many Nigerian leaders appear to cherish.

Since 1999 when democracy was restored in Nigeria, we have witnessed stunted growth and dwindling fame. It is certainly time for citizens to get tired of leaders who do same things over and over again while expecting different results. Interestingly, our leaders are not exactly as incompetent as their performance often show; rather, they are basically greedy.

It is therefore time to embrace visionary leaders who can initiate innovative and viable policies that can improve the living standards of the people which is why Alex Otti fits in here. For the many years he served as a member of the editorial board of the Nigerian news outlet, Thisday, he also conscientiously ran a weekly column titled "Outside The Box." The new governor has no option than to meet the treatise underpinning his column

Beyond personal qualities,

another factor which stands Otti out and which compels many to look towards him is his membership of the Labour Party (LP)- a political organization that recently introduced to Nigeria, a sudden electoral tsunami; the first of its type in the country's political history in which election results against the traditional run of play were recorded.

As of today, it is not only that Peter Obi, the phenomenon around LP is yet to become Nigeria's president or to unveil his promised programmes, Otti is so far the only surviving governor of the LP's school of thought. The mantle of acting as the leader of the reformist agenda therefore places on him, an obligation to use his performance to underscore what the nation can miss in Obi's absence.

Another reason why Otti is easily a reference point concerns the progressive points he made two years ago when he delivered the 10th Anniversary lecture of Adeleke University Ede, Osun State. The major point he harped upon at the lecture was the adverse impact which the huge cost of governance was having on Nigeria.

One of the things begging for change according to Otti, remains the inexplicable remuneration of legislators in which "Nigerian senators earned about \$450,000 per annum, over two and half times the \$174,000 per annum that their counterparts earned in the United States of America."

He also decried the trend whereby 70 percent of the national budget was spent on recurrent expenditure. The extent to which this can hinder societal development speaks for itself.



■ Governor Alex Otti

The beauty of Otti's points lies in the fact that those of us who cried ourselves hoarse over the stupendous looting of the nation by its political leaders can now rejoice that a state governor has got to join our group. He has all the perquisites of office such as daily televised press conferences to urge our leaders to fall in line. If it is all he does at the Council of state meetings and indeed, in the Nigerian Governors' Forum, may be things may improve.

And because charity must begin at home, it is expedient to appeal to Otti here to review the list of 19 commissioners he has nominated to assist him to govern Abia. In order that no local government area feels cheated, he can have 17 for now at one per local area while the remaining 2 can serve as special advisers, and no more.

Except he follows this line of thought and mobilizes people of like minds to support relevant reforms, he might be unable to be part of the interest group that should dissuade the Senate and President Bola Tinubu from appointing 20 advisers that have already been approved.

Otti and his team would probably not be able to also join us in fighting against the practice of having as many as the constitutionally provided 37 ministers at federal level let alone to indulge in the old wastage of adding 6 appointees to represent geopolitical zones. Of course, there

would be pressures from those who 'helped' the party to secure electoral victory but it is ill-advisable to use scarce public resources to reward political jobbers. Apart from cost, an obese governance framework has for long be proven to have the capacity to hinder efficiency and the attainment of goals.

What the above suggests is that we shall need more than the Alex Ottis for the enormous job. Other Nigerians like him must join in deprecating an inflated workforce which is no longer in vogue worldwide. This probably explains why the United States which has a larger population than us has only 20 secretaries - the equivalent of ministers.

As already rationalized by the President of the Lagos Chapter of Florida based International Human Rights Protection Service, Kalu Ofon Emmanuel, it is unacceptable to have too many officials at this time of financial squeeze where the country and the citizens are undergoing serious hardship, suffering, hunger, and economic backwardness.

We are therefore at a time when patriots should rise up to mobilize our government to reduce both the numerical strength and cost of governance in Nigeria.

For this to happen, several voices are needed to speak to the nation's political class because everything in Nigeria today has

been politicised and except some politicians join the patriots that are fighting to keep the nation together, not much can be achieved. In this regard, searchlight needs to be beamed at the National Assembly because the contribution of that arm of government to the nation's financial woes is more than big.

Only last week, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abass, appointed as many as 33 senior aides. This included the Chief Press Secretary, different from the Special Assistant on Media and Publicity, the Deputy Chief of Staff, Administration, as distinct from the Deputy Chief of Staff, Legislative and then separate Special Advisers, one for Special Duties and another for Political Matters.

Besides, the budget of the legislature is by far too large. In the Adeleke University lecture of 2021 cited earlier, Alex Otti had revealed that the average House of Representatives member in Nigeria earned, at that time, \$224,000 more than his counterpart in the United States.

He also added that the budget allocation to the National Assembly of about N150billion annually, was far in excess of the annual combined budgets for education and health for the entire country. If Nigerians are unable to rise to stop this unfathomable transactions, not much progress can be made. The same is true of the regime of constituency projects which our prime anti-corruption agency has since discovered to be phoney.

No one knows exactly why the executive branch has since 2015 struggled to enforce a collaborative venture between it and the legislature which by law is expected to check the excesses of the former. In 2019, however, a new legislature emerged as a rubber stamp to the executive.

From then till 2023, several bizarre loans were taken to the extent that over 90 percent of our national revenue is now dedicated to debt servicing. Whereas we can do little or nothing about the number of federal legislators in Nigeria until certain provisions of our constitution are changed, there is doubt if we are also incapacitated in doing anything about whether or not our law makers should operate on part time basis or whether they should run the same public service salary structure as other Nigerians in the country's public sector who are employed by the same tax payers.

(Tonnie Iredia's Article "Nigeria's Governance Cost: Can Alex Otti Help?" was first published on Sunday Vanguard Newspaper of 2nd July 2023.)

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## Politics

### Senate confirms Onuigbo, others for NEDC positions

Stories by Okereke Kate

The Senate has confirmed the nomination of former member representing Ikwuano-Umuahia Federal constituency at the House of Representatives, Hon Sam Onuigbo, to represent the South East region as a member of the governing Board of the North East Development Commission (NEDC), after his successful screening and confirmation of his nomination.

NEDC is charged with superintending over the overall development of the North East region of Nigeria.

Onuigbo, who sponsored Nigeria's Climate Change Act during his time at the House of Representatives, said after the screening that he would use his position to drive for the mainstreaming of climate action into the development plans of the North East in order to engender sustainable development within the region.

The former National Assembly member who represented

Ikwuano/Umuahia Federal Constituency stated that climate change plays a key role in the insecurity in the North East.

According to him "it will be impossible to attain sustainable development without building resilience and integrating climate action in the region's development plans".

Others screened and confirmed by the Senate were: General Paul Tarfa, Chairman (North East, Adamawa); Frank Achinike Owo Member (South South), Hon Gambo Maikyau Member (North East), Abdullahi Abbas member (North West), Zaf Steven Ondora, Member (North Central), Chief Mutiu Lawal Areh, Member (South West), Mohammed Goni Alkali (Managing Director), Musa Yashi (Executive Director Humanitarian Affairs), Ahmed Abdulsalam Yahaya (Executive Director OPS), and Dr. Abubakar Garba Illiya (Executive Director, Admin and Finance).

In an interview, the former House of Representatives member, Hon Sam Onuigbo, expressed gratitude to God for the opportunity given him and

also thanked the President for the nomination and opportunity to represent the South East geopolitical zone on the Board of the North East Development Commission (NEDC).

Hinting our reporter what Nigerians should be expecting from him, Hon Onuigbo promised to render excellent services that have the potential to impact meaningfully and productively on the people of the North East Region, as well as, the South East.

According to him, Nigeria needs to be developed in a universal way, adding that once they finally assume duties, they would take a close look at what is on ground and from there, determine areas that need special attention.

He said he would contribute to the overall development of the North East Region in a sustainable way, as one clear objective of the Commission is to reconstruct and rehabilitate the infrastructure destroyed or damaged by Boko Haram. "This is to enable Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), to return to their homes and also lay a solid foundation for the proper and sustainable development of the region in all facets of human endeavor. However, it is absolutely important to address one of the major causes of instability in the region, which is climate change.

"We will work to mainstream climate change into the overall development of the region to ensure that there is sustainability. It is not enough to just reconstruct buildings and allow the occupants to live in degraded lands where they can neither farm, nor graze nor carry out fishing activities. The people's means of livelihood must be restored through deliberate and coordinated acts of mitigation, adaptation and restoration", he stated.

### Economists as political gladiators bid Eze Ogbulafor farewell

As the former National Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Prince Vincent Eze Ogbulafor was committed to mother earth at his hometown, Obuohia-Itaja, in Olokoru, Umuahia South Local Government of Abia State, political gladiators across party lines, stormed the state to pay their last respect to a political bigwig who unified politics in Abia and Nigeria at large.

The Requiem Mass which took place at the Holy Cross Catholic Church, Abiaukwu Olokoru, had the presence of the 2023 PDP Presidential candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, represented by the PDP Abia Central Senatorial candidate, Col Austin Akobundu (rtd), the Governor of the State, Dr Alex Otti, the Deputy Governor of Imo State, Placid Njoku, his Ebonyi State counterpart, Dr Eric

Kelechi Igwe, the senator representing Abia Central Senatorial District, Sen Darlington Nwokocha, the Senator for Abia South District, Distinguished Sen Enyinnaya Abaribe, Sen Chris Adighije, Sen Nkechi Nwogu, the member representing Isialangwa North/South Federal Constituency, Hon Ginger Onwusibe, his Ikwuano-Umuahia colleague, Hon Obi Aguocha, the Speaker of the Abia State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Emmanuel Emeruwa, Rt. Hon. Deputy Speaker ABHA, Rt. Hon. Austin Mmeregini, one time PDP Governorship Aspirant, Chief Okoro Omerekpe, past and present Abia Lawmakers, former Deputy Governor of the State, Sir Ude Oko Chukwu, Traditional Rulers, Religious Leaders among others.

In an interview with the Press, the former Senator representing Abia Central, Sen Chris Adighije, described the demise of the late Prince Ogbulafor as tragic and shocking, stating that by the rule of the game, which he had earlier discussed with the deceased while he was alive, that when he (Adighije) goes down, he (Ogbulafor) should stand in and take charge, not knowing that it would be the other way round.

Sen Adighije lamented that he has lost someone so close to him, saying that his heart is in grief, as he lack words to describe the late Vin.

In his view, the Senator representing Abia South District, Sen Enyinnaya Abaribe, said the late Prince Vincent Ogbulafor was a friend, brother, colleague and a compatriot, whose style of



■ Late Prince Vincent Eze Ogbulafor

politics created a unifying force among political players in Abia and beyond, describing him as a man of peace, who never had a bone of hatred for anyone, but related with everyone regardless of party affiliations.

According to Sen Enyinnaya Abaribe, the late Prince Vincent Ogbulafor never had any disagreement with anyone, adding that if he did at any time, he would quickly make peace and embrace the person involved, praying God to accept his soul.

For the two time Senator and one time House of Representatives member, Sen Nkechi Nwogu, who couldn't stop recounting the several contributions of Prince Vincent Eze Ogbulafor to her political career, said she specifically left Abuja to attend the burial based on who and what the Late Ogbulafor was to her, expressing sadness, that the political enigma had left at 73.

Narrating her relationship with the late political stalwart, Sen Nwogu hinted that the late Prince Vincent Eze Ogbulafor, played a significant role in her political party participation as far back as 1991-1993, stressing that her first appointment as a member of the Abia State Economic Advisory Board under Dr Ogbonnaya Onu, was only made possible through the help of the late Ogbulafor, recounting that, that particular appointment, launched her into the political arena.

She expressed deep emotions, stating that the late Prince Vincent Ogbulafor, would be missed for his leadership character, open mindedness, forthrightness and his ability to unify party

members, as well as, form a strong force for his party, pointing how he helped in bringing Sen T.A Orji to PDP back in the days.

Sen Nwogu, further prayed God to grant his soul eternal rest, while she wished the late Prince Vincent Ogbulafor had stayed more twenty years.

Recall that the late Prince Vincent Eze Ogbulafor OFR, was born on the 24th of May, 1949 and died on October 6, 2022.

The Ugwumba of Olokoru was a Nigerian prominent politician, distinguished statesman, business icon, economist, a political scientist, an egalitarian and a philanthropist who demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the nation's economic development, democracy, and unity. An administrator per excellence, who devoted his life of selfless service and charity to humanity, without compromising his faith in God.

He was a man of great humility, who showed respect to all, irrespective of age and class. He held various public offices at different times, at both state and national levels. Born to the humble family of His Royal Highness, Late Eze J. J. Ogbulafor (the Uvuoma 1 of Olokoru) in Olokoru, Umuahia South Local Government of Abia State.

During his lifetime, he was the National Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Minister for Economic and Special Projects, National Secretary of PDP, Abia State Commissioner for Works, Lands, Housing and Transport respectively, the Chairman of Federal Tenders Board, among other offices held.



■ Hon Sam Onuigbo

### TUC lauds Gov Otti over appointment of member as commissioner

The Trade Union Congress of Nigeria, Abia State chapter, has lauded Governor Alex Chioma Otti for selecting a member of the Trade union, as one of his cabinet members.

In an interview with newsmen in Umuahia, the State chairman of the TUC, Comrade Ihechi Enogwe, said the Union was elated to have her one time Chairman as a Commissioner in the state.

He said that the choice of Comrade Nwanganga Sunny Onwuma, as a Transport Commissioner, would bring

sanity to the transportation sector being a Labour unionist.

According to Enogwe, Comr Onwuma would make good policies that would bring about improved services in the transport sector, adding that the Governor has done well for appointing him and described him as a round peg in round hole.

According to him, the Transport Commissioner would endeavor to carry everyone along, putting his best to develop the sector and Abia at large.

In an interview, Commissioner for Transport,

Comrade Nwanganga Sunny Onwuma, described his appointment as divine, pledging to bring policies that would revitalize the sector.

He said he would strengthen the e-transport policy that has already started, so that funds realized would no longer go into individual pockets but government's coffers.

Comr Onwuma assured that the illegalities going on in the various parks in the state would be curtailed, stressing that he would contribute his quota to help drive the Abia economy forward.



# Photo Speaks



Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti (right) exchanging pleasantries with AEEM Ms. Arunma Oteh during a visit to the governor recently.



Abia State Governor, Alex Otti (left), the celebrity investor and businessman, Mr. Obinna Iyegbu known as Obi Cubana and others during a visit to Abia Governor at his home in Nvosi Isialangwa South LGA.



Abia State Governor, Alex Otti (6th right) in a group photograph with retired Judges in the state.



Former Super Eagles captain and the chairman of Enyimba International Football Club of Aba, Mr. Kanu Nwankwo (2nd right) in a group photograph with the Chief of Staff to the Governor Pst. Caleb Ajagba, commissioner for Information Prince Okey Kalu, SA to the Governor on Media and Publicity Mr. Fedinand Okeoma and others at Government House Umuahia.

PHOTOS: Sunday N. James

# ANKARA-PATCH DESIGNS

Fashion tips with Sandra Chibuikwe 08038311355

Ankara fabric has come to stay and will keep evolving as long as fashion and style is concerned. Somehow, life has its way of getting us bored of the things we love. Little wonder experts advise we do things differently when things seem to go south. Take for instance, Ankara patchwork. One of the many uses of Ankara fabrics is Patchwork. It is a trendy style made with Ankara.

When we talk of Ankara patchwork styles, we are simply referring to those lovely styles you see where different little pieces of Ankara fabrics are cut out, then joined to another material.

Most times the Ankara patches are joined to plain cotton materials, laces, Jeans, velvets and other times, they are joined with other pieces of Ankara fabric to form a beautiful design. You probably have one in your collection, if not you would definitely have seen some flooding your timeline. I'm pretty sure whoever invented the patchwork must have gotten bored of wearing clothes made with only Ankara fabric all the time. They wanted something else not entirely different from the original though. They wanted something that'll further beautify their outfits.


Picking one patchwork style to slay can sometimes be confusing as they always look so beautiful when seen on fashion slayers.

Here are some Beautiful Ankara Patch Work Styles you will Crush and I know for sure you will love them too:



Photo Credit: PINS





# NATIONAL Ambassador

N200 VOL. 22 NO. 078 "Uplift the people, project the nation" AUGUST 06, 2023

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# BONANZA!

# Bonanza!!!

# BONANZA!!!



In line with the spirit of this year's ABIA-DAY celebration, Abia Newspapers And Publishing Corporation, Publishers of **National Ambassador** Newspapers is offering a **30%** discount for all congratulatory messages to our New Governor, **Dr. Alex Chioma Otti**, including all other elected State and National Assembly members. Our teeming customers and the general public are hereby urged to maximize this opportunity while the offer lasts.

**Signed:**  
**Management.**







**ABIA STATE GOVERNMENT**  
**JUDICIAL PANEL OF INQUIRY ON THE RECOVERY OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTIES, FUNDS AND RELATED MATTERS.**  
**CALL FOR PETITIONS/MEMORANDA**

The Government of Abia State of Nigeria has instituted a Judicial Panel of Inquiry on the Recovery of Government Properties, Funds and Related Matters.

**1. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- a. To receive and examine complaints from individuals and corporate entities on the looting and or conversion of Government properties, funds and related matters from May, 2015 to May, 2023 and, where necessary, make recommendations to the Governor for remedial measures or any other measures as appropriate.
- b. Examine and ascertain whether Government moveable and immovable assets and funds or part of it have been illegally acquired/occupied/converted to private use from May, 2015 to May, 2023 and identify the persons responsible and further make recommendations for recovery and appropriate sanctions.
- c. Ascertain the extent of allocation and revocation of land in Abia State from May 2015 to May, 2023 and determine the propriety of such allocation and revocation.
- d. Review the award and execution of contracts from May 2015 to May 2023 and ascertain if they were in conformity with extant laws.
- e. To review employments, promotions, appointments, payments in respect of the employments, appointments and termination of the employments and appointments from May 2015 to May 2023 and to ascertain if they were in conformity with extant laws.
- f. To investigate any other matter incidental or related to the foregoing Terms of Reference and make recommendations to the Government based on their findings.

**2. PROCEDURE**

- a. Interested members of the public are requested to submit seven copies of Petitions/Memoranda typed in double-line spacing.
- b. Each Petition must be verified by an affidavit while a memorandum may be notarized or verified by an affidavit.
- c. Each Petition/Memoranda shall contain:
  - i. The full address, email and telephone number of the petitioner
  - ii. Names, addresses and phone numbers of a respondent
  - iii. Date, place, nature and circumstances of the complaintand shall be submitted in an envelope and addressed to:

**Secretary to the Judicial Panel of Inquiry on the  
Recovery of Government Properties and Funds  
and Related Matters  
Old Government House  
Umuahia  
Abia State.**

- d. Documents must be submitted on or before twenty-one days from the date of this publication.

**3. INAUGURAL SITTING:**

Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2023 at 10am  
at Old Government House, Umuahia.

.....  
**Engr (Mrs) Justina Oluchi Ebo**  
Secretary to Judicial Panel  
For: Chairman.



**Sporting Ambassador**

# Saudi tsunami rock Europe

By Joseph Jacob

**W**hen Cristiano Ronaldo left Manchester United to Saudi Arabian side Al Nassr for a two-and-a-half year contract worth \$200m a year, soccer pundits and fans across the globe were rattled. What could have enticed such a great player to Saudi Arabian league rated 39<sup>th</sup> at that time?

One season later the Saudi Arabia tsunami hit Europe rock and strip it of

and former Liverpool goal-getter Roberto

Firmino in the attack. The 26 year-old played 124 games for Newcastle United and scored 13 goals since 2019 when he joined the club from Nice of France.

After winning the treble - UEFA Champions League, English Premier League and FA Cup - with Manchester City last season, Riyad Mahrez moved to Saudi Arabia for £30m.

The 32 year-old Algerian international

before ovation becomes lowest, to Saudi Arabia for a fee of £16m, where he hope to command a regular shirt.

**ALETTIFAQ**

Steven Gerrard was appointed manager of Al Ettifaq and his major task should be to improve the clubs standing on the league table.

Last season, the club finished seventh in the 16-team league. In order to meet his target, Gerard returned to Europe to sign a key player.



■ Cristiano Ronaldo in action for Al Nassr

years at Amfield and won every trophy with the Reds.

The 33 year-old moved to the club for a fee in the region of £12m.

**ALITTIHAD**

Having won five Champions League titles with Real Madrid, Karim Benzema moved to Saudi Arabia for new challenges and joined Al Ittihad, a club based in Jeddah.

The reigning Ballon d'or winner, 35, signed a three year deal and is expected to earn an annual salary of £172m.

Benzema will have the company of his countryman and former Chelsea midfielder, N'Golo Kante. The 32 year-old mid-field maestro will earn £7.2m

every month. Kante played for Chelsea for seven seasons, played 269 matches and scored 13 goals.

Joao Pedro Neves Filipe known as Jota was instrumental to Celtic winning a domestic treble last season.

The Portugues scored 15 goals en route to that success before leaving for the Saudi League, where he will be paid £10m every year.

**ALHILAL**

Former Wolves midfielder Ruben Neves proved his worth at the Molineux. He joined the English club on July 8, 2017 and played for six season, playing 253 times and

scoring 30 goals. No wonder Al-Hilal were willing to splash £47m for his services.

Furthermore, Al-Hilal spent a whopping £17m to get the services of Senegal international Kalidou Koulibaly from Chelsea. The 32 year-old is expected to bring steel and stability in Al Hilal's defence.

Sergej Milinkovic-Savic has left Lazio for a fee in the region of £34.3m to lace his boots for Al Hilal.

While in Lazio he won player of the season twice and is expected to bring creativity and dexterity in Al Hilal's mid-field.

**ALNASSR**

After signing Cristiano Ronaldo last season, Al Nassr must be satisfied with the services of the Portugues international, who scored 14 goals in 20 appearances, that the reached out for another player.

Croatia international Marcelo Brozovic helped Inter Milan reach last season's UEFA Champions League final.

In his eight season at the San Siro he won five major trophies. He will play alongside Ronaldo this season having signed for Al Nassr for £15m.



■ Kante(L) and Benzema(R) play together for France, they will also play together at Al Ittihad

its stars. It was reported that the Saudi government, through a Public Investment Fund released \$620 billion to attract football stars across the globe and especially from Europe to the Saudi Arabian League.

Here are some of the clubs in Saudi Arabia and big players they have poached from Europe.

**AL AHLI**

The Jeddah based club have signed some quality players from Europe to strengthen their squad. Allan Saint-Maximin signed for the club for £23m.

He is expected to join former Manchester City winger, Riyad Mahrez

played 236 games for the citizens and scored 78 goals.

Besides winning the Champions League last season, Mahrez won four Premier League titles, two FA Cup titles, three League Cup titles and a Community Shield title.

Roberto Firmino spent eight years at Amfield where he became the highest-scoring Brazilian in the Premier League.

He will lace his boots for Al Ahli this season. He is expected to earn £17m annually.

After making just 10 Premier League appearances last season, Senegal international goalkeeper, Eduard Mendy decided to leave the Stamford Bridge

He went for his former teammate Jordan Henderson who spent 12



■ Riyad Mahrez won the UEFA Champions League with Manchester City last season.



## Business and Economy

### President Tinubu rolls out interventions to cushion Subsidy removal.



The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Asiwaju Bola Ahmad Tinubu (BAT) has rolled different interventions to reduce the impact of the fuel subsidy removal on Nigerians. The president disclosed this recently during a presidential speech while addressing Nigerians on some socio-economic challenges. The speech titled 'After darkness comes the glorious dawn', revealed the reasons behind some policy measures undertaken by his administration.

He further disclosed that the once beneficial fuel subsidy has outlived its usefulness, hence it had to go. "For several years, I have consistently maintained the position that the fuel subsidy has to go. This once beneficial measure had outlived its usefulness. The subsidy cost us trillion of naira yearly.

Such a vast sum of money would have been better spent on public transportation, healthcare, schools, housing and even national security. Instead, it was being funnelled into deep pockets and lavish bank accounts of a select group of individuals', he further stated.

President Tinubu also acknowledged the tough patch and hurt, Nigerians are going through as a result of the subsidy removal, which includes the cost of fuel going up, rising cost of food and other items, households and businesses struggling to survive but stated that his intention is to help and not hurt the people.

The president revealed that the FG is working closely with states and local governments to implement interventions to ease the pains of the citizens. 'What I can offer in the immediate is to reduce the burden our current economic situation has imposed on all of us most especially on businesses, the

working class and the most vulnerable around us', he also said.

Speaking further, the president outlined the areas his administration is working to cushion the effect of the subsidy removal; executive orders to address unfriendly fiscal policies and multiple taxes, suspension and deferred of some taxes in the manufacturing sector.

The government will also spend #75 billion between July 2023 and March 2023, while #125 billion will be injected into the micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSME) and the informal sector also within the same period.

Other areas of government interventions will also include, engagement of various farmers' associations to ensure that prices of foods, remain affordable, cultivation of 500,000 hectares of farmland for an all-year-round farming, release of tones of grains from strategic reserves to households at moderate prices, provision of fertilizers, seedlings and other inputs to Farmers. The FG also promised to approve infrastructural support fund to states to enable the states intervene and invest in critical areas and revamp decaying health care and educational infrastructure. There will also be the rolling out of buses across states and local governments for Mass transits at a much cheaper affordable rates.

The working class was also not left out, as Tinubu also said that his administration is working in collaboration with the Labour Union to introduce a new minimum wage for workers 'I want to tell our workers this: your salary review is coming.

Once we agree on the new minimum wage and general review, we will make budget provisions for it for immediate implementation', the president further disclosed.

## Gov. Otti's TSA implementation in Abia State

Stories by Kelechi Eme-Ogidi

The emergence and swearing of Dr. Alex Chioma Otti as the 5th Executive Governor of Abia state has witnessed the introduction of new ideas on the way and manner governance especially public sector finance is being managed in the state.

One of the new economic policies of the present administration is its determination to implement the Treasury Single Account (TSA) in the running of the state's finance.

TSA is one of the financial and treasury management reforms which is already in use by the Federal government of Nigeria. It is an initiative that involves the operation of a unified structure of government bank accounts in a single account or a set of linked accounts for all government payments and receipts.

Gov. Otti in its effort to change the way things are done in the state and in line with global best practices in public finance, has expressed his intention to implement TSA system in the state.

Dr. Otti, while speaking in different fora has promised that the state will transit to TSA by September, 1st 2023. Enumerating the benefits that will accrue to the state as a result of the TSA operation, His Excellency, stated that TSA which entails the centralization of all the state's revenue and payments will enhance transparency and efficiency. The TSA system will also fight fraud, streamline tax payments, generate employment, empower Abians, attract investors amongst, other benefits.

While the operation of TSA may be a novel financial model in the state, it should be noted that the Federal government has long embraced it since 2015, as it has been in full use by the former president, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari since his first tenure in government as all federal government ministries, departments and agencies has long embraced it. The adoption of TSA at the federal level has ensured a unified structure of government bank accounts in a single account or a set of linked accounts for all government payments and receipts.

This has benefitted the federal government in areas of effective cash management,

blocking of loopholes in financial loses, establishment and efficient disbursement and collection mechanism for government funds, elimination of operational inefficiency and costs associated with maintaining multiple accounts across multiple financial institutions. Other benefits that have accrued to the federal government as a result of TSA implementation include: improvement in liquidity reserve, efficient management of domestic borrowing at minimal cost and optimal investment of idle funds.

The TSA system having been successful at the federal level with so many benefits accruing from it, its adoption at the state level is a welcomed development. There will be a lot to financial benefits if Abia joins the league of other states that have adopted the TSA model of public finance.

The implementation of TSA will ensure an effective cash management in the state as it enables the consolidation of all inflows from various state MDAs into a single account domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) or a money deposit bank. With this arrangement, multiple accounts maintained in different banks by MDAs will be closed thereby saving costs associated with

running of these accounts. TSA system will also enable the government to know its financial position online real-time at anytime. This will be a departure from the past where the Ministry of Finance or the Accountant General (AG) will have to write to head of MDAs to know their bank balances before the aggregate bank account position of the state can be determined.

The benefits of the government knowing its true financial standing at any point in time cannot be overemphasized, it makes for easier planning and allocation of its financial obligations and deferring of payment if need be to avoid financial embarrassment. Transition to TSA in the state will also include the digitalization of the tax payments in the state. Embracing tax digitalization will lead to elimination of all forms of sharp practices including fraud, diversion of process and middlemen in tax payment and collections.

The system will ensure that all government revenues in form of taxes, levies, royalties, commission, etc are paid into a centralized account and receipts generated. This will not only eliminate diversion of government revenue into

private pockets, but will increase government revenues, and stop payments that would have been given to either consultants or revenue agents. Digitalized tax system will boost the confidence of tax payers, bring more people into the tax net since people know that their payments are getting to the right place and can be done from the comfort of their homes or offices and receipts generated to authenticate payment.

Disclosing the benefits of TSA, the Executive Governor of the state, Dr. Otti, revealed that, TSA will increase the revenue base of the state, help in the ease of doing business, attract local and international investors, eliminate fraud and all forms of manual collection of revenue, save costs, and help the government to fulfill its campaign promises to the people of Abia state.

There is no system without its own challenges; TSA may have its own pecuniary challenges but the benefit far outweighs the disadvantages. The major benefit embodied in adopting TSA in public finance is in the area of promotion of financial transparency and bringing of all government funds in bank accounts within the effective control and operational purview of the AG or the Commissioner for Finance. This will enthrone a centralized, transparent and accountable revenue management in the state.

As the September 1st, 2023 dateline draws closer for transiting to TSA in the state, there is need for all Abians to support and align with the present administration in its desire to promote transparency, openness, efficient and effective management of the state's finances.

The government should also be lauded for coming up with the initiative. On its own part, the government should ensure, the enactment of relevant laws for the operation of TSA, adequate training of the relevant officers that will be involved in its implementation and operation and also continue to educate, sensitize and engage the general public, especially those doing business in Abia on the need to embrace TSA as the new normal as this will ensure smooth implementation, adoption and acceptance of TSA system by all.



■ Gov. Chioma Otti

### Abia Residents can't afford sit at home – Gov Otti

The Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has stated that residents of the state cannot afford to stay at home for two weeks in compliance with the directive issued by a faction of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), led by Simon Ekpa.

Dr. Otti disclosed this recently after attending a security meeting held between the National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu, and the governors of the South East

states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo, to address the issue of insecurity in the region at Abuja.

Addressing the press after the meeting, Gov. Otti disclosed that Abians cannot sit at home when there are works to be done, as many people living in the state depend on daily earnings to make a living.

"Governments all over the world cannot be threatened. You cannot afford to sit at home when you have work to do. A lot of people live on a daily basis; the taxi drivers, the keke drivers; the woman that is selling pepper in the market, if she sits at home for two weeks, she will die of hunger. So, it (the order) is null and void," Dr. Otti further stated.

The Abia Governor also disclosed that only a handful of people were benefitting from the sit-at-home order, using the instrument of fear to intimidate the people and as such, government cannot sit and watch them succeed.

The meeting had in attendance, the Governor of Imo state, Senator Hope Uzodinma and representative from other south east states of Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi states.



**Sporting Ambassador**

# 2023 FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP: ...Super Falcons Spearhead Africa Challenge

Stories by Joseph Jacob

The Super Falcons of Nigeria emerge the first African team and maybe the only African team to reach the round of 16 of the ongoing World Cup. They did not lose any match in the

group stage, the defeated co-host, Australia 3-2 and settled for goalless draws with Canada and Ireland.

Their best performance was against the host. Despite playing in front of raucous home

fans, the players kept their cool to come from behind to defeat Australia 3-2.

After Uchenna Kanu's first half equalizer, Osinachi Ohale and Asisat Oshoala scored to put Nigeria in firm control before the home side pulled

one back.

The Copper Queens of Zambia lost 5-0 to Japan and Spain respectively before they thrashed Costa Rica 3-1, a result that was too little too late as they were already eliminated.

Bayana Bayana of South Africa lost their opening match 2-1 to Sweden while the Atlas Lionesses were humbled 6-0 by Germany in their opening match as well.

As the Super Falcons file out against their round of 16 opponents next Monday, they are expected to display the fortitude that will help them equal their 1999 performance when they reached the quarter-finals of the World Cup.



■ Super Falcons of Nigeria

## ...South Africa, Brazil Battle for Survival

Action return to Groups F and G today in the ongoing FIFA Women's World Cup with the Bayana

Bayana of South Africa and South American giant, Brazil battling for survival.

In Group F, Jamaica

will take on Brazil while whipping girls Panama will confront France.

Brazil need an outright win over the Reggae Girlz of

Jamaica to qualify while their opponents need only a draw to qualify. Brazil got into this difficult situation when they lost their second match 2-1 to France and Jamaica who secured a goalless draw in their opening match against France defeated Panama by lone goal.

This result left Brazil third on three points while France and Jamaica have four points with French ladies top with superior goal difference.

Similarly, the Bayanan Bayana of South Africa will be fighting to join Nigeria in the round of 16 as they take on Italy at the Sky Stadium in Wellington, New Zealand.

In the group's other match Argentina will take on already qualified Sweden. South Africa are third with only one point while their opponents, Italy are second with three points and a draw with South Africa will give the Europeans the second-placed ticket.

Therefore, South Africa must defeat Italy and hope that Sweden do not

## ...Lionesses Seek to Devour Colombia

Atlas Lionesses of Morocco will tomorrow take on Colombia in their last Group H match as they strive to qualify for the round of 16. The North Africans are walking a tight rope as their 6-0 loss to Germany in their opening match have left them with a huge negative goal difference.

If Germany as highly anticipated defeat South Korea and Morocco defeat Colombia, Morocco, Colombia and Germany will all be tied on six points. It will come down to goal difference and Morocco will be eliminated. Nevertheless, the North Africans gave themselves a lifeline when they defeated South Korea by a lone goal.

They need to defeat

Colombia and hope that South Korea do not lose

to Germany.



■ Nuhila Benzina became the first player to wear hijab at the World Cup.



■ Samuel Chukwueze signing for AC Milan

## TRANSFER: 10 Nigerians on the Move

Ahead of the new football season, clubs are selling and signing players to strengthen their team in order to compete for trophies next season. Nigerian players are also on the move.

CALVIN BASSEY

The Nigerian defender moved from Ajax to Fulham in a four-year contract. The English side have the option of extending the contract for one more year. After playing two seasons for Rangers he moved to Ajax last season and will be in action this season for English Premier League side Fulham.

CYRIEL DESSERS

Signed for Scottish Premiership side Rangers for a fee of around £4.5m from

year deal with an option for extension. He joined from Torino on a free transfer. His five years in Italy saw him make 113 appearances for Torino.

Aina will have the companion of his countryman Taiwo Awoniyi, whose goals helped keep Forest in the elite division.

KENNETH OMERUO

Kenneth Omeruo is making his third return to Kasimpasa in the Turkish League. His first stint was when he moved on loan from Chelsea in the 2015/16 season. He later returned for the 2017/18 season. He has made 53 appearances across both spells. His current move is from CD Leganes of Spain for an undisclosed fee.



■ Leon Balogun returns to Rangers of Scotland.

Cremonese in the Italian Serie A, where he made 29 appearances and scored seven goals. Unfortunately he could not save his former club from relegation to Serie B after the finished 19th last season.

SAMUEL CHUKWUEZE

The Abia State born forward signed for Italian side AC Milan from Villarreal, where he played 207 matches and scored 37 goals. He signed a contract worth €20m with an additional eight million euros in potential bonuses. Chukwueze is expected to remain in Milan till June 30, 2028 and will earn an annual salary of €4m.

WILLIAM TROOST-EKONG

Ekong spent the later part of last season on loan at Salernitana in Italy, who failed to trigger their right to sign him permanently. Therefore, the Super Eagles vice-captain moved to PAOK Salonika of Greece, where he signed a €1m contract.

OLA AINA

The Nigerian defender is the first signing of Nottingham Forest this summer. He joined the English side on an initial one

CHIDERA EJUKE

The Super Eagles winger joins the Belgian champions Royal Antwerp on a season-long loan from Russian side CSKA Moscow. He spent last season on loan to German side Hertha Berlin and was restricted to only 21 games due to injury.

VICTOR BONIFACE

After scoring 22 goals and making 12 assists in 55 matches for Belgian first division side Union Saint-Gilloise, German side Bayer Leverkusen have signed the 6'2" hit man. It is believed that the transfer fee is in the region of €20m.

VICTOR OLATUNJI

The Nigerian striker has joined Czech champions Sparta Prague from another Czech side Slovan Liberec. He spent only six months in his previous club, made 18 appearances, scored eight times and provided an assist.

LEON BALOGUN

The Nigerian defender returns to Rangers as the club's seventh summer signing from Queens Park Rangers. He played for the Ibrox side for two seasons between 2020 and 2022. He helped Rangers win the Scottish Cup in 2022 as well as reach the Europa League final.





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## Forum

With

Jones Nnanna Ike



# Otti and his critics

**The new administration in Abia State led by Dr. Alex Otti, Renown Economist, Writer and Ex Banker is less than 70 days in office. This period could be adjudged as being too early in accessing the performance of the government regardless of any criteria used. Nonetheless, it could be said that within this short period, Dr. Alex Otti and his team could be said to be working tirelessly to ensure that the locust years of Abia History is put to an end in favour of a new flowering era. This assertion is based on several bold, selfless and innovative approaches to governance adopted by the Governor and his team.**

The first of such measures was the constitution of a 101-member transition council which was made up of very brilliant minds drawn from diverse backgrounds. It was this egg heads that expanded and translated Dr Alex Otti's 42-page Manifesto document into a workable instrument for public policy action. It might also be necessary to restate the fact that his inauguration into office on 29th May 2023 was overshadowed by a lingering industrial action embarked upon by organized labour to protest the rascality of the last regime over matters concerning wage bills and general fiscal indiscipline.

The Labour Unions had voluntarily called off the strike on the day Dr Otti assumed duties as a good will gesture to the new government. Earlier during the campaigns, the then governorship candidate of the labour party had promised to pay the workers on the 28th day of every month. Two months down the line, it has been a promise kept. Many workers in the state can attest to receiving their salary alert on that date.

The government of Dr Alex Otti is working assiduously to ensure that the challenges of delayed or non-payment of salaries and pensions which was the dominant character of the last regime will be consigned to the dust bin of history, to be remembered by future generations only as one of the state's ugly past challenges.

Additionally, Dr Alex Otti has ably demonstrated how prepared he was for leadership through a thorough and meritorious recruitment exercise into the top echelon of his administration. Most of the people so far recruited to manage the different organs of government are top professionals drawn from diverse backgrounds.

This is just as they are people of unquestionable integrity. Many of these new managers of the State resources are versed in the modern art of management where

efficient and quick service delivery is the mantra.

Dr. Alex Otti working along with this new crack team has succeeded in blocking all the leakages which were the instruments for the bleeding and pillaging of State resources. Such leakages had different colorations. Some were erected as instruments for the outright looting of the state treasury while others acted as instruments for the over inflation of costs in public sector procurement. Yet some others acted as conduits for the inflation of wage bills through the instrumentality of ghost workers.

The war on this sector is still raging and the new administration is not relenting. The setting up of a judicial panel of enquiry to recover the looted assets of the state is one of the measures so far taken to boost the war on corruption. This is just as the current verification exercise instituted by the State's

Gov Otti's messianic approach to development is best exemplified in the war on refuse which he declared as an emergency in his first inaugural speech when he was sworn into office. Government's hard work on this war coupled with several innovation's adopted have ensued a continuous gain on the battleground as the physical environment gradually returns back into wearing a new clean look.

Another notable area that has not escaped the attention of Dr. Alex Otti's administration is health care delivery service in the State. This sector got a boost when the State Government kick started a free health care delivery service on July 15th 2023 at the Aba General Hospital. The programme now holds every Saturday of the week. The exercise has since been

to a transparent, open and corrupt free procurement system which the administration has put in place to ensure that the public derives maximum value from its procurement process.

Taking all the above into consideration, it could be said that even though it is still quite early to engage in any meaningful assessment of the Dr. Alex Otti administration that came into power through widespread popular public support, its early gambits are such that could make discerning observers to come out with the verdict that Dr. Otti is doing well. The Government is clearly on track and indeed Dr. Otti is achieving what he set out to do.

However, Dr. Otti's hereditary enemies and critics seem to be ignorant of these achievements or they choose to feign such ignorance. His enemies who are mainly those that benefitted from the past decadence have since engaged the services of their bootlickers and hirelings to discredit every move of the new government. The same characters whose only qualifications for top Government positions was a conscienceless and uncanny ability to tell lies have been recruited for this "yahoo, yahoo job".

In the past their job while in the employment of government was to conjure rosy impressions of Government performance while the State was bleeding. These dark characters who picked the crumbs from the masters table have now found new roles as critics of the new Government.

These hired musketeers who praised and clapped for those that looted the State treasury while all the development indices stagnated or noose dived have recently upped their games dishing out lies after lies about the current government performance in office, all in an effort to confuse the general public and weaken the support base of the popular Governor.

However, it is consoling to note that despite the machinations of these hirelings whose stock in trade is well known to the public, Dr Alex Otti continues to maintain a tight organic relationship with critical sectors of the Abia society. They have always supported him right from his early days in partisan politics till date. Such support has been transferred to his Government. It is most likely that such support will endure with the kind of structures of good governance being put in place by his administration.

The new structure is intended to jump frog the State development trajectory away from its stagnated past to a new era of prosperity and efficient service delivery. This then is the basis of the failure which all such hirelings have so far met with and will continue to meet no matter how hard they try.

Jones Nnanna Ike is the General Manager/Editor-in-Chief Abia Newspapers and Publishing Corporation



Otti's men at work during the last month sanitation exercise

Head of Service for public sector workers is meant to fish out the numerous ghost workers and those others that were fraudulently employed into the state public bureaucracy.

Another realm that has engaged Dr Otti's characteristics efficiency is the rehabilitation of the physical infrastructure in the state. There is now the common site of caterpillars rolling out in different parts of the state particularly in the urban centres of Aba and Umuahia. It is expected that with the seriousness attached to the reconstruction of roads by the administration, the coming dry season will witness massive rehabilitation of both urban and rural roads. This is not forgetting the several public sector buildings that are currently undergoing massive rehabilitation works.

extended to the General Hospital Amachara, Umuahia. More General Hospitals are expected to be keyed into the programme as the Government increases its capacity to do so. The unprecedented number of patients that troop into the two hospitals to seek for medical help every Saturday just goes to show how dire the health care delivery system in Abia was.

However, the free medical service is just a stop gap measure that has been put in place to address the emergency situation in the sector pending when the building blocks will be erected to sustainably address the challenge of health care delivery system in the State, which in the past suffered a great deal of neglect.

All these developments are in addition