

Amaechi Is More Popular Than PDP

~ Princewill

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The state is doing so much in the area of tourism; do you believe in what government is doing? Yeah! In the case of Rivers State, efforts have been on for a while. Only recently a couple of us had been out there looking at the potentials of tourism at the state, and it is obvious that the potential we have is great. No doubt, we would be exploring this potential.

I would like to have seen a bolder first step. But let us hope that they would learn as they go along. Three words counts here. One; sincerity, second wisdom, third is commitment. We have to demonstrate that we are sincere, in all sides, and we are prepared to listen and learn. It is from that process that we can gain wisdom on how to approach the problem and so we must gather wisdom.

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Do you think AC has the potential to take over government in 2011? Oh yeah! If you asked the PPA the same question in 2006/7 before the election, their answer would have been probably different. The truth, really, is that Amaechi is more popular than his party, the PDP. While a recent opinion poll put his popularity at over 75% that of his party languishes at a miserly 30%. In other words, Amaechi is twice more popular than PDP... There is a lesson to learn from that, not for himself and PDP alone, but for all of us.

.... **As He Advances Road Projects In Rivers**

Road construction and re-construction in Rivers State has advanced tremendously, with some contractors working day and night to meet the target date of completion, as ordered by Governor Chibuike Amaechi.

The pace of work at various road construction sites reflects the fact that the governor can be trusted on his words. A good example is the Rumuola Road, which is being re-constructed into a dual carriageway, with underground drainage.

Work has progressed greatly at the site and the road is nearing completion, following the governor's order earlier this year that the contractor should work night and day to beat the deadline for completion of the road project.

In a chat with the journalists recently, Senior Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to the governor, David Iyofor, confirmed that the governor intermittently inspects the ongoing project, even at night, to ensure a speedy delivery of the project and that the contractor, MCC, sticks to the required quality of the construction.

Iyofor said: "The project, valued at over N2.5 billion, has so far progressed impressively. Some finished parts of the road, which is already in use, are being adorned with flowers, trees and grasses, in line with the government's policy of beautifying the city with lush greenery. Strategic spaces have also been created within the road for street light installations."

In the meantime, residents of the area and its environs, as well as road users, who



Gov. Amaechi

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Tonye Princewill, Action Congress (AC) candidate in the last governorship election in Rivers state is unapologetic about his love for the cause of the Niger Delta people and believes Governor Chibuike Amaechi is more popular than his party, PDP.

President Yar'Adua recently granted a blanket amnesty to the militants in Niger Delta, how does this news make you feel because Gov. Amaechi hinted in a recent interview that there are no more militants in the Niger Delta, but criminals in disguise. Do you think the general amnesty will augur well for the region?

Let me sort our question by addressing the second part, what Amaechi said. I am impressed the way Amaechi has been able to balance his business with moving the state forward.. Sometimes this can be misunderstood. But it is important to note that when he refers to the current scenario as one created by criminals, he is right because militants have withdrawn to the background.

Unfortunately, the criminality is what is making headlines.

Having said that, on the subject of amnesty, I am sorry to resist the temptation to be pessimistic. If nothing else, the offer has generated heated debate this:.

As a Party Chieftain in Rivers, how do you distinguish your relationship with genuine agitators and people you see as criminal elements? It is easy to see the genuine agitator, such like Asari Dokubo, who can't be bought, speak their minds in spite of consequences. On the other hand, many others are less interested in the collective interest. It's a pity that we are having this discussion after the pronouncement instead of before, thereby losing a great opportunity to realize that the international component and shareholder buy-in, and framework for peace are all key components currently absent.

So, can we say that Rivers State is today safer than yesterday? If the question is: Rivers State safer? Yes? If we are saying can it be safer? Still I think the answer is yes. Let us not forget however that the safety we experience today in Rivers is based on several months of hard work and several commitments to peace by many unseen hands. So, amnesty has added to that. However, if amnesty is not well managed and followed up by addressing the root causes, the consequences could be disastrous.

You are happy about amnesty, then? Yes, but amnesty is linked to disarmament, and disarmament is linked to rehabilitation. If the process is not seen end to end, it will not bode well.

In other words, you believe in the efficacy of the amnesty? It is too early to see how it will play out. This is only step one in a long chain of events. It is a shaky first step, however.

Would you have done it like Yar'Adua? No. I would have gone a different way; I would not have bombed Gbaramatu and killed innocent civilians. Secondly, I would have engaged stakeholders in a white paper. Third, I would have introduced an international component to address the issue of mistrust and credibility. Finally, I would have proposed a holistic solution, with honesty as just one of the major planks to engage in dialogue of any form. Indeed, I would like to have seen a bolder first step. But let us hope that they would learn as they go along. Three words count here sincerity, wisdom and commitment.

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ply the road, are beginning to feel more at ease, as traffic has improved greatly on the road, which before now was characterized with hold-up that could last for hours, due to its narrowness and intersections.

Amadi Wokedi, a resident of the area, said: "Government has turned the area around with the construction of the road."

But he added that the road is gradually turning into a slum, with shops erected on every side blocking entrances into living compounds. "Before government demolished houses and shops on the right of way, you hardly could locate the entrance to compounds if you were visiting someone in the area. The place was too tight and dirty; people emptied

their dustbins even into the open gutters, causing them to get blocked.

"But the demolitions and road construction that is still going on has changed the face of Rumuola."

Another resident, Ngozi Dike said: "Although we still experience slight hold-up on the road, due to the ongoing construction, I can say that the road is getting freer. There used to be constant traffic jam on Rumuola Road, but the expansion and dualisation has helped to make it free and I believe by the time the road is completed, hold-up will

vanish." This belief was also shared by motorists plying the road, like Uche Izunna, who thanked the governor for his commitment to making Roads in the state motorable and beautiful.

The road connects other major routes, like the Ikwerre road via Rumuokwuta Junction; GRA via Eligbam Road; Wimpey via Orazi; Rumuigbo; and Aba road, making it a centre of attraction for Road users in the axis.

The current expansion and conversion of the Rumuola road into a dual carriageway is expected to completely give way for free flow of traffic, both for vehicles and pedestrians.

Also, water logging and flooding of some areas on the Rumuola road and some of the other roads being re-constructed with drainages is gradually vanishing. Already, works on other road project sites are being sped up to meet target dates of completion.

According to Iyofor: "More than half of the Slaughter/Trans-Amadi Road and drainage project has been completed with walkways. The project valued at about N4.6billion, has also been adorned with greenery, while drainage construction on the Rumuobiakani/First Bank Road has been completed."

Iyofor also noted that "a lot of other road construction and re-construction work is still on-going in different parts of the state, such as the construction of a dual carriageway on the Airport/Isiokpo/Omerelu road in Ikwerre Council, which is a federal road that connects Rivers State with Imo; construction of Omofa-Agba Ndele road in Emohua; construction of East-West-Sogho-Okwale Road in Khana at a cost of over N1billion naira; dredging works and roads construction at Opobo/Nkoro, valued at over N3.5 billion," he said. Amaechi's zeal for development in the state can no longer be overemphasised, given the rate at which projects are being executed under his watch.

Roads and drainages, flyovers and bridges, schools and medical centres, independent power projects and rural electrification, the Greater Port Harcourt City and beautification of the state capital and lots more are infrastructural and developmental projects being put in place by the administration to better the lot of Rivers State and its people.