

Governor Amaechi & The Challenge Of Development

Many problems cut across all facets of Nigerian society, but most especially in the government society. Many Nigerians have the creative mind but Nigerian government has made them lack the capacity to exhibit their talent. And Nigeria's population is witnessing a tremendous growth. Many agencies to work together with to develop Nigeria and Nigerians are mostly concerned about the healthiness of their pocket. The nation's lawmakers are bent on making laws the masses have not really come to feel the impact. They tend not to understand the nitty-gritty of what it takes to be a lawmaker in a democracy? They have many times turned pugilists in much avoidable uproars. "Nigeria should tap into her professionals in Diaspora to help in the nation building", the former American Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Walter Carrington said in a speech this year. As a result, to develop Nigeria may be hard.

Like the former governor of Akwa Ibom State, Mr. Victor Attah who is well endowed with the etymology of town planning even that he didn't much in the execution of works in the many towns he planned in that state before his tenure expired, one man who is following closely in town planning is the Governor of Rivers State, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Amaechi. The difference is that Amaechi is bent on planning and execution of the many towns he has planned.

As a city-planner who majored in English and Literature, Amaechi has been involved in environmental development, sustainable development, livable communities, smart growth initiatives, redevelopment of slums. But before Amaechi came to power, nothing seems to have changed in the architectural development of the state. And he will be doing many Rivers people disservice if he did not change the way houses is built in Rivers State: where fences are joined together causing obstruction to the waterways in the neighbourhoods. A city is much more than beautiful houses without plan. A city must have a total concept.

One observer said that the current trend around the world is to build structures that make economic and environmental sense. In Europe and North America, architects, driven by the rising cost of energy, global warming and better quality of life for the world's population are working tirelessly on new frontiers in structural designs. In the United States of America, the Department of Energy collaborates with builders to ensure that new residential and commercial properties include prescribed energy efficiency standards. Some homes have already cut their energy needs from the national grids by as much as 40-60%. A few have achieved 100%. In some American states, you get tax rebates if you build with certain material such as solar panels. The same thing is going on in Europe.

However, the governor is doing his best. Amaechi in April 28 this year said that the foreign investors should be involved in the Nation's economy as it is secret for the country's faculty to try-to-win favourably in the inclusive market. Amaechi made the inclusion during a talent stopover to Eleme Petrochemicals Company, operated by a foreign investor, Indorama Area.

It is not early that on that visit the governor observed that the way Nigerian industries are going oblivion was becoming a source of thought. Amaechi saw and congratulated the management of Indorama for enlivening the once in-poor-health Eleme Petrochemical Company.

For his gusto to developing Rivers state, it was on record that Amaechi said that he was in readiness to do business with the company in whatever form. His interest was that the creation or building of more of such company would create job opportunities for the people.

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Gov. Amaechi

Regional & Rural planning (this is not effective in the rural areas), issuance of land development plans, approval of building plans and preparation of development master plan. (Bravo!).

While many of the Ministries under Amaechi are doing marvelously well, the Unity Government run in the state has not really disappointed the people. With Prince Tonye Princewill heading the Action Congress (AC) in the state and the head of BoT the Forum of Organized Opposition Political Parties (FOOPP), a newly emerged over 43 parties in the state that is in support of the Amaechi-led government.

FOOPP's mission is to foster unity and progress amongst member political parties in order to work diligently with all partners in Rivers State, irrespective of their political divide, restore the glory and integrity of the State and its people, by encouraging true participatory democracy which guarantees equal opportunities for all Rivers people, abhorring the "winner takes all" syndrome, provide virile and constructive criticism when necessary and commend giant strides of government, to support democratic principles and encourage electoral bodies to organize true and proper elections that will reflect the true wishes of the electorate, to protect member political parties before, during and after elections, to support government to encourage active participation of Rivers State indigenes in strategic sectors of the State economy.

Princewill is one such Rivers indigene who has been in the development pace of the state, like his friend, Governor Amaechi. Princewill is among the 28 men powered with the responsibility of finding solution out

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disappointing the Rivers people and their 'visitors', the office of the Commerce and Industry Ministry-headed by Prince Ogbonna Nwuke has a lot of work to do in this area. The ministry must live up to its manifesto of formulating policies and facilitating the establishment of cottage industries in the state, promoting and encouraging investments in the state as a means of opening up employment opportunities as well as provision of goods and services, develop cooperative societies that could bring about the Transformation of the Rural Areas, register all business premises and maintain a data base on them, liaise with the Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industry and other related agencies on Small and Medium Scale Industries and to formulate and implement policies on Industrial and Commercial activities in the State. Without doubt, Nwuke will not disappoint.

Another area the fast development sort for in Rivers State can be attained is when the Ministry of Culture and Tourism also lives to its promise of identifying and promoting the culture of Rivers State to the West end, (as this will attract investors to the state), identifying and developing tourism in the state and packaging cultural attributes and recreational facilities for the promotion of tourism. But how many people have the Ministry of Employment Generation and Empowerment gainfully employed, empowered with skills to enable them secure employment, make companies operating in the State conform to the relevant law of the Federal Government on Employment? That is the problem.

The Ministry of Urban Development has lived to the expectation with the Hon. Commissioner Osima Ginah exhibiting Development Control Review and preparation of physical development plan, Urban Renewal and transportation plan, urban reorientation and enforcement,

to better the economic policy of the State. Prof Nimi Briggs headed that committee.

On behalf of the state government, Princewill has brought the Silver Bird Group, a private entertainment outfit in Nigeria to partner with the Rivers State Government that resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the construction of a Multi-Purpose Entertainment Park in Port Harcourt worth about N20 billion on 4th December, 2007. Reportedly, this project was expected to transform the area around the Isaac Boro Park and the Cultural Centre to a world class Multi-Purpose Entertainment Park and the State to a true modern Garden city. More grease to his elbow, Amaechi is providing bread on the tables of many Rivers State through his developmental strides.

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