

## Over 150 Roads Under Construction In Rivers

As part of measures aimed at expanding Infrastructural Development to all parts of the state, the Rivers State Government says it has embarked on the construction of over 150 roads across the state.

Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi made this known while speaking at the Thanksgiving Service in honour of Prof. Nimi Briggs at Our Saviour's Chapel, Interdenominational, University of Port Harcourt.

Governor Amaechi explained that the number of road projects was a direct consequence of increased Federal allocation accruing to the state, noting that as the funds are properly utilized, the people would be the ultimate beneficiaries.

He disclosed that as a matter of policy, the government insisted that every contractor handling its project must set aside 20 percent of his contract sum to Rivers indigenes, not as tax, but as an amount meant for the supply of latrites, cements, rods and sands etc, which must be awarded to indigenes, remarking that Rivers people are not ready to access the fund but prefer quick cash.

The State Chief Executive also lamented that the N2billion Micro-Finance loan scheme for the people are not being properly utilized by Rivers people while the Skye Bank Transport Scheme in partnership with the state government has equally not attracted enough indigenes' interest.

The Governor said the people of the state, especially the youths, need value re-orientation to change their attitude, pointing out that he would prefer to invest in the provision of infrastructure than to give individuals money.

"Please our dear Pastors pray for us, we need God in this State. We need total value re-orientation we need to change from given us cash to working for cash", Governor Amaechi declared.

Governor Amaechi called on Rivers people to work together to stop kidnapping in the state because of its negative effect on the society, emphasizing that the present administration is determined to make a difference in the governance of the state.

He urged the people to be patient with the state government to enable the government deliver on its promises, adding that the urban renewal programme was to restore the beauty of Port Harcourt and solicited for understanding.

In his sermon, the Anglican Bishop of the Niger Delta North Diocese Rt. Rev. Ignatius Kattey thanked God for sparing the life of Prof. Nimi Briggs, noting that every one on earth has a unique purpose to accomplish.

Bishop Kattey said Christians owe gratitude to God for their lives and therefore need to serve Him in spirit and in truth and commended Prof. Briggs for his interest in God's work.

Responding, Prof. Nimi Briggs said the Thanksgiving Service was organized for three reasons mainly to mark his 65th birthday, retirement from service of the University of Port Harcourt and to mark his survival in the hands of his abductors which occurred in December 2007.



Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State (right), discussing with Dr. Carles Lopse, United Nations Assistant Secretary, during a courtesy visit to Government House, Port Harcourt

## Niger Delta Situation Is Overblown

### ...UN Assistant Secretary General

The United Nations Assistant Secretary General Dr. Carles Lopse has said that the situation in the Niger Delta area is being blown out of proportion to scare away visitors to the region.

Dr. Lopse who is also the Executive Director of UNITAR made this observation in an interview with Government House Correspondents, shortly after a closed door meeting with the Rivers State Governor, Rt. Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, at the Brick House in Port Harcourt.

"I think it is important for us to separate speculation from fact, we are on ground in the Niger Delta, so we know exactly what is going on here. There is a lot of rumour about the area but there is also something that need to be taken care of", Dr. Lopse

said.

He opined that there is the need to transmit the right image about the Niger Delta region, emphasizing that "there is an image problem which needs to be managed and once it is handled, people would realize that the government is committed to the transformation of the area".

On the issue of scary travel advice issued to foreigners by their home offices, the UN Assistant Secretary General explained that despite the security challenges in the region, its offices in Port Harcourt are functional, because they have assessed the situation and identified areas that are dangerous, but not to exaggerate the situation and lump the entire area together as no go areas.

According to him, "a lot of people live

here, and they do not encounter any banditry or any security problem different from what they would find in many other countries, and different parts of Nigeria", pointing out that the United Nations' office is in Port Harcourt which was chosen as base for its operations.

The UNITAR Executive Director said he had useful discussions with the state Governor in terms of its work with stakeholders for capacity training and development of communities, and expressed satisfaction with the level of progress being recorded so far.

He affirmed the excellent working relationship existing between his organization and the South-South States, especially Rivers State, and expressed hope that the collaborative effort would continue to be strengthened in the years ahead to achieve set objectives.

## Oil Sector: South-South Govs Condemn Lopsided Appointments

By Wilson Uchendu

Elders of South-South under the auspices of South-South Economic Development Forum has condemned in its entirety the lopsided appointments in the oil/gas and energy sectors at the Federal Level of government.

The condemnation came at a meeting which was held at Brick House, Port Harcourt was well attended by all Governors in the South-South, Senators, of

and Members of House of Representatives from the zone, Speakers of Houses of Assembly, established Leaders and Elder Statesmen from the zone.

In a statement at the end of the meeting the Chairman of the Forum, Senator Liyel Imoke called for unity and cooperation in the zone. Senator Imoke said: "We call for regional cooperation and unity towards ensuring our common strategic development objectives. We denounce all forms of militancy and criminal activity in the region. We call on our youths to lay down their arms and allow for peace and development in the region.

The Forum equally rejected the recent appointments in the oil and gas sector particularly those in Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC which neglects the principle of Federal character.

The statement said "We condemn the recent appointments in the oil/gas and energy sectors at federal level and call on the Federal Government to revisit these appointments and ensure equitable representation from the zone".



From (l) Gov. Liyel Imoke of Cross River State, Gov. Adams Oshiomhole of Edo State, Gov. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State, Obong Godswill Akpabio of Akwa Ibom State, Governor Timipre Sylva of Bayelsa State and Prof. Amos Utuama (SAN) Deputy Governor of Delta State pose after their meeting in Port Harcourt recently