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Concord Times (Freetown)

Sierra Leone: Supplementary - IMC Awards Deserving Journalists

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28 February 2011

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Freetown — It was a joyous moment at the Lagoonda Entertainment Complex on Friday as journalists received awards from the Independent Media Commission (IMC) for their outstanding performance over the past one year in reporting accurately and helping promote democracy and good governance in the country.

The 5th IMC Annual National Media Awards ceremony was witnessed by a host of dignitaries and journalists including the Executive Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, Michael Schulenberg, Minister of State in the Office of the Vice President, Dr. Komba Kono and Chairman of the National Telecommunications Commission (NATCOM), Siray Timbo.

IMC Chairperson, Mrs. Bernadette Cole, said a total of 118 entries were received by her commission with 75 contestants, adding that the amount of entries received from journalists this year was commendable.

She commended the judges for being independent and impartial in choosing the winners for the different categories, while urging the winners to keep up the good work and standard. "The number of categories increased this year. We have more sponsors coming on board and a total of 36 categories," she explained.

Mrs. Cole maintained that the country continues to enjoy press freedom and media pluralism and that the commission welcomes the new status of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC).

President of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Umaru Fofana, encouraged and warned journalists that the coming months would be very tough because individuals will be meeting them to promote their cause.

He said during the country's brutal rebel war, journalists suffered the most, but worked very hard to ensure that the war comes to an end.

"Over the past years, many good things have happened in the media. Let me thank the president for his role in ensuring that the SLBS becomes an independent national broadcaster. I want to say I am very much satisfied with the performance of young journalists," he said.

Airtel head of Corporate Affairs and Communications, Kevin Kellie, said they are very pleased for having sponsored the IMC single-handedly to award journalists for the past four years, noting, "We are happy that other sponsors have come on board."

He said the company was proud of its continued success and immense contributions towards national development, adding that they have been able to change the way people communicate by their innovative promotions and value added services.

"The work of journalists is to go all out and seek the truth. They should also strive to serve the profession with thoroughness and integrity," he urged.

Statements were also made by the ERSG, Michael Schulenberg, Minister of State in the Office of the Vice President, Dr. Komba Kono and NATCOM Chairman, Siray Timbo.

One of the winners, Rachel Horner of Concord Times - in a very joyous mood - told this reporter that she was happy to have won the best "Free Healthcare Story" and "Female Reporter for 2010" awards. "They are awards that I truly deserved," she said.

"I am lost for words. My winning came because of my hard work and I will continue to do the best. I hope to win more awards in the coming years."

Winners in this year's IMC National Media Awards include: Rachel Horner of Concord Times - "Best Free Healthcare Story for 2010" and "Female Reporter for Print"; Abu Bakarr Jalloh of Premier News - "Human Rights and Best News Story"; Abu Bakarr Kamara of Punch Newspaper - "Creative Writing and Sport"; and Edward Kargbo of CTN as "Promising Young Journalist of the Year", among others.

Entertainment from Rapture Kids, Rosaline Strasser-King and comedian Desmond Benya climaxed the ceremony.

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