

Obaseki rallies stakeholders in Uhumwode, Orhionmwon on Regional Devt, Benin City Masterplan

BLESSING IMAGBENIKARO

The Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, on Wednesday met with residents and other stakeholders in Orhionmwon and Uhumwode Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the State to seek their support and input in the State's Regional Development and Be-

● **says Edo key to Nigeria's survival**

nin City Master Plan. Obaseki at the stakeholders' interactive session held at Edo State College of Education, Abudu in Orhionmwon LGA, said the plans will serve as a roadmap for the progress and sustainable development of the State within the next 30 years.

The governor said, "In the last seven and half years, we have done a lot as a government as we will not leave the State the way we met it. We don't have a master plan in Edo and Nigeria and it has led to retrogression, not development. We will put down a plan for the next 30 years which

will lead successive administrations to develop the Edo.

"We have brought seven investors to Uhumwode and Orhionmwon LGAs that will start mechanized and large-scale agriculture. We are working towards feeding the South-South. Edo has fertile land in Nigeria.

"Every local government must have at least one technical school and must be linked to a particular trade and the students will have a place to work. Abudu Campus is one of the campuses to train teachers that will teach our students."

On his part, the Commissioner for Food Security and Agriculture, Hon. Stephen Idehenre, said in the master plan,

technology will be introduced to agriculture to encourage young people into the sector.

He noted that the State has brought in investors that have invested in the oil Palm industry which is a sector that has the potential for massive employment opportunities for Edo youths.

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The Nigerian Observer

...that the people may know



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Ease of payments coming as Tinubu approves consumer credit scheme -Pg 2

Tinubu explores trade, investment, security cooperation with Netherlands

TELIAT SULE & BLESSING IMAGBENIKARO

● **country accounted for 15% of Nigeria's export in Q4 2023**

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has travelled to the Netherlands on a state visit, marking a pivotal moment in bilateral relations between Nigeria and that country.

Tinubu's state visit follows an invitation from the Prime Minister Mark Rutte of The Netherlands and is poised to foster cru-

cial discussions and partnerships between Nigeria and The Netherlands.

The Netherlands is one of Nigeria's strategic partners in terms of the sources of development finance funding, agriculture and exports. For instance, during the third quarter of 2023, Nigeria recorded N988.66 billion worth of exports to the Netherlands,

representing 9.56 percent of the nation's overall exports in that quarter.

As of the fourth quarter of 2023, Nigeria shipped N1.91 trillion worth of exports to the Netherlands, amounting to 15.05 percent of the country's overall export value.

Pointing out the significance of President Tinubu's

engagements during his stay in the Netherlands, presidential spokesperson, Ajuri Ngelale, revealed that the agenda included high-level meetings with Dutch government officials, business leaders, and distinguished figures such as His Royal Majesty, King Willem-Alexander, and Queen Maxima of the Kingdom.

"President Tinubu's visit aims

to strengthen ties and explore opportunities in trade, investment, security cooperation, and cultural exchange," Ngelale stated, pointing out the multifaceted nature of the discussions planned during the visit.

According to the presidential spokesman, the President is scheduled to participate in the Nigerian-Dutch Business and

Investment Forum, a strategic platform bringing together leaders from both nations to discuss collaboration across various sectors, with a particular focus on agriculture, water management, and port operations in order to ensure sustainable development and economic growth.

In terms of development finance, The Netherlands' development finance institution, FMO, has played crucial roles in providing the needed scarce capital to Nigerian businesses. In 2021, FMO provided Access Bank with \$102.50 million to boost SME financing in the country.

Verod Capital Growth III, a Nigerian based fund providing growth capital to medium-sized businesses in Anglophone West Africa also received \$15 million from FMO.

CardinalStone Capital Advisors Growth Fund (CCAGF) based in Nigeria received \$10 million funding from the same institution.

Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (ETI) in 2017 received to the tune of \$50 million funding from the Dutch institution.

The First City Monument

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NATIONAL SUMMIT ON JUSTICE:

L-R: President, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Yakubu Maikyau; Deputy Senate President, Jibrin Barau; Vice President Kashim Shettima; Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, and Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Olukayode Ariwoola, during the National Summit on Justice, held at the National Judicial Institute (NJI) in Abuja, yesterday. Photo by Omoye Aminu.

Safety Move: More flight delays expected as minister grounds Dana Air -Pg 2

The Nigerian Observer

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NEWS

Safety Move: More flight delays expected as minister grounds Dana Air

BILL OKONEDO

● orders comprehensive audit of airline

In furtherance of his averred overriding emphasis on passenger safety, Aviation Minister, Festus Keyamo, Wednesday, suspended the operations of Nigerian local aviators, Dana Airlines, a day after one of its aircraft skidded off the runway on landing at the Murtala Muhammed Airport in Lagos.

This will likely put some pressure on Nigeria's domestic airline industry which is rife with daily flight delays and cancellations though industry regulations rightly emphasise safety above all else.

The suspension effectively grounds Dana Air's eight aircraft and 1,316 seats from the local aviation industry while it lasts.

Dana Air operates two Boeing 737 aircraft, each with 166 seats, as well as one McDonnell Douglas (MD-82) aircraft with 148

seats and five McDonnell Douglas (MD-83) aircraft with 167 seats each, bringing the total number of seats on the airline's fleet to 1,316.

In recent times, foreign exchange scarcity has made it difficult for the country's domestic airlines to speedily effect aircraft repairs and maintenance, putting pressure on flight schedules and forcing cancellations and delays.

According to a report from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority titled 'Executive summary on international and domestic flight operations', a total of 11,321 (over 53 per cent) flight delays were recorded out of 21,295 flights, while 308 flights were cancelled in the first quarter of 2023.

The minister directed the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) to suspend Dana Air, pending a comprehensive audit

of the airline. The audit will encompass all aspects of safety protocols, maintenance procedures, and financial health to ensure full compliance with the aviation sector's regulations.

From its hub at the Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal 2 (MMA2), Dana Air currently operates domestically on the Lagos - Abuja; Lagos - Port Harcourt, Lagos - Uyo as well as the Port Harcourt - Abuja and Uyo - Abuja routes.

In a letter to the NCAA Director-General titled 'Immediate Suspension of Dana Air Pending Safety and Financial Health Audit', the minister said the move was necessary to ensure safety and regulatory compliance.

"As the supervisor overseeing our nation's aviation safety and regulatory compliance, it has come to the Honourable

Minister's attention that recent incidents involving Dana Airline have raised serious concerns regarding both the safety and financial viability of their operations," read part of the letter signed by the Permanent Secretary to the Minister, Dr. Emmanuel Meribole.

"In light of these incidents, arid with the paramount priority being the safety and well-being of our citizens and travellers, the Honourable Minister has directed that you immediately initiate the suspension of Dana Airline's fleet until a comprehensive audit can be conducted.

"This audit should encompass all aspects of safety protocols, maintenance procedures, and financial health to ensure full compliance with our aviation regulations."

Reps summon NNPC CEO, oil companies over environmental

JOY ODOR

The House of Representatives on Wednesday summoned the Group Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), Mele Kyari to appear before it on May 8, 2024 over environmental degradation caused by the activities of oil companies in oil producing communities in the country.

The Chairman of the House Committee on Environment, Pondi Julius Gbabojo, gave the order at a Joint Committee investigative hearing on the need to investigate the service and unprecedented environmental damage within the communities.

The joint Committees are on the Environment, Petroleum Resources (Upstream), Petroleum Resources (Downstream) and Climate Change.

This is even as Gbabojo also mandated the chief executives of some oil companies and relevant government agencies to appear before the Joint Committees.

The oil companies summoned include Chevron Nigeria Limited, Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited, Total Energies, Oando Oil Limited, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited and Seplat Energy, among others.

Other government agencies summoned by the Committee are the Nigeria Midstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, National Oil Spill Detection Response Agency, as well as the National Environmental Standards Regulations and En-

forcement Agency.

However, the National Environmental Standards Regulations and Enforcement Agency sent an excuse through a representative, but the rest did not give any reason for their absence.

The Chairman affirmed that the matter to be addressed was critical and threatened appropriate sanctions if those invited failed to appear.

"We will do another letter to everybody. They should turn up to answer questions on issues pertaining to degradation of the environment due to the activities of oil companies.

"They have to be here on the 8th of May. If anybody fails to show up on, then we would decide as a committee on what to do. I want to believe that there was enough time, two letters were sent, there was ample time for them to see the letters and duly honour. But for putting on a human face, we would still give another time to do so," he said.

"When the probe commenced on Wednesday, only four out of 35 oil companies and agencies invited for the probe showed up" he said.

Earlier, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, in his opening speech recognised the immense responsibility of the Committee as public servants to protect, safeguard the environment and meet the challenges posed by the ravages of environmental damages, the need to balance economic prosperity and social responsibility to ultimately achieve equitable development.



EDO STATE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

L-R: Edo State Commissioner for Finance, Budget, Economic Planning and Development, Mrs. Adaze Aguele-Kalu; Commissioner for Social Development and Gender Issues, Mrs. Christabel Omoh Ekwu; Commissioner for Education, Dr. Joan Oviawe; Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki; Edo State House Assembly (EDHA) member representing Orhionmwon South, and Commissioner for Health, Dr. Samuel Alli, at a meeting with stakeholders on the Edo State Regional Development and Benin City Master Plan in Orhionmwon and Uhunmwode Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the State, yesterday.

Ease of payments coming as Tinubu approves consumer credit scheme

UYIOSA ISAAC

A consumer credit scheme in the offing promises to improve the quality of life of teeming Nigerians by availing them the opportunity to enjoy spread-out payments on the purchase of goods and services, in place of the current cumbersome system of full and immediate out of pocket payments.

To this end, President Bola Tinubu has approved the take-off of the first phase of the Consumer Credit Scheme for access to goods and services.

Announcing the President's approval of the scheme on Wednesday, Ajuri Ngelale, special adviser on media and public-

ity to the president, said: "Consumer credit is the lifeblood of modern economies, and every hardworking Nigerian should have access to social mobility.

"This scheme will facilitate crucial purchases, such as homes, vehicles, education, and healthcare, essential for ongoing stability to pursue their aspirations."

The Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation (CREDICORP) will strengthen Nigeria's credit reporting systems, ensuring every economically active citizen has a dependable credit score.

This score will serve as personal equity, facilitating access to consumer credit. CREDICORP will also offer credit guarantees

and wholesale lending to financial institutions dedicated to broadening consumer credit access, according to Ngelale.

"This initiative promotes responsible consumer credit as a pathway to an improved quality of life, fostering a cultural shift towards growth and financial responsibility," he further averred.

In line with the President's directive, CREDICORP has launched a portal for Nigerians to express interest in receiving consumer credit.

Working Nigerians interested in receiving consumer credit can visit www.credicorp.ng to express interest before May 15, 2024.

The scheme will be rolled out in phases, starting with members

of the civil service and cascading to other members of the public.

"This is a significant step towards empowering Nigerians to enhance their quality of life. We encourage all eligible citizens to take advantage of this opportunity and join the journey towards financial stability and growth," the statement said.

It further said the Consumer Credit Scheme is expected to stimulate local industry and job creation, as increased demand for goods and services drives economic growth.

"Through responsible repayment, individuals will build credit histories, unlocking more opportunities for a better life," the statement said.

Tinubu, explores trade, investment, security cooperation...

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Bank (FCMB) received \$30 million facilities from FMO in 2023.

In addition to the above, the Netherlands is also one of the highest sources of capital importation into Nigeria in recent times.

According to the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), in 2021, the total capital imported into Ni-

geria from the Netherlands was \$409.89 million. It was \$171.27 million in 2022 and \$149.93 million in 2023.

In the area of agriculture, Nigeria late 2023 solicited the assistance of the Netherlands towards assisting the country in addressing the crucial areas of the sector. The call was made by the Honourable Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Sen.

Abubakar Atiku Bagudu when he received the Chief Executive of SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, Simon O'Connell in his ministry late 2023.

Ngelale added that after President Tinubu's meetings at the Netherlands, he will proceed to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting scheduled for April 28-29, 2024. WEF is a forum that

presents an invaluable opportunity for global leaders to support one another on the issues of global collaboration, growth, and energy for development.

"President Tinubu's diplomatic endeavours signify Nigeria's dedication to international cooperation and strategic alliances, essential for achieving sustainable progress and prosperity," Ngelale added.

Plaudits as Edo Queens clinch spot in Super Six tournament

The Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has congratulated the State's female football team, Edo Queens for clinching a spot in the Super Six tournament after finishing second in Group B of the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL).

Obaseki, in a statement, expressed optimism that the team will have an excellent outing at the Super Six championship to hoist the State's flag on the continental stage.

Obaseki said, "I heartily congratulate our own dear Edo Queens for clinching a spot in the Super 6 Championship after

securing the second position in Group B of the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL).

"We celebrate your exploits and accomplishments as you continue to give an excellent account of yourselves, showcasing your exceptional talent and team spirit, and making us proud with your outstanding performance."

He added, "As you go into the Super Six Championship, I charge you to continue on this impressive run even as we are confident of an excellent outing at the championship for a chance to hoist the State's flag on the continental stage for the first time."

Obaseki rallies stakeholders in Uhunmwode...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Also, the MD of Edo State Transport Agency, Mrs. Edugie Agbonlahor, said the State as part of the masterplan will develop all forms of transportation in Edo State.

She noted that Benin City has an Airport as another is being proposed in Auchi.

"The Edo State Governor has approved for the purchase of water buses for the agency to commence water transportation and it would serve as a pilot scheme. The water buses would look like ECTS buses, as Jetty will be built around riverine areas," Agbonlahor said.

"We are also working to connect rails into Benin City, Abudu and other areas to ensure peo-

ple don't depend on road or air transportation alone. The governor has built a bus terminal in Benin City as a pilot phase and it has recorded success and now it will be extended to other parts of the State. The government has also embarked on junction improvements to solve traffic problems in the State," she said.

In his response, HRH Edo Uwaifo, Engie of Omolua-Igbanke, thanked the governor for his foresight of a master plan for the State as it will guide the State in its developmental plans.

He, however, appealed to the governor to upgrade the Igbanke General Hospital to enable more people in the area to better benefit from the government's huge investment in the health sector.