

Okpella Cement, Don Mac, Duport, others gain pioneer status on Obaseki's reforms

GOODNESS OYEDUN

The expansive reforms by the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration have attracted a number of companies into Edo State which now enjoy pioneer status approval from the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC).

● manufacturing, food processing, agribusiness emerge as active sectors

The details of the companies' status were released by the NIPC in its Report on Pioneer Status Incentive Application for Third Quarter of 2023 covering July to September of that year.

The NIPC said the release is in compliance "with the requirements of the Industrial Develop-

ment (Income Tax Relief) Act Cap I7, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 and the Pioneer Status (Delegation of Certain Statutory Functions) Order of 2017."

According to the commission, the companies in Edo State with active pioneer status include

Okpella Cement Plc, which employs 570 staff and has invested N178 billion in its operations which span manufacturing of cement, limestone, and plaster in the Okpella axis of the state.

The other companies include: "Don Mac Limited, which has invested N8 billion in the state

and employs 175 staff. It has an active license which spans for 3 years, from 2021 to 2024. The company is involved in the manufacturing of gas cylinders, tanks, reservoirs and containers of metal."

Other companies in the state that are processing their appli-

cations include Saro Allied Resources and Processing Nigeria Limited, Duport Midstream Company, Greenhills Agricultural Products Limited, Dufil Prima Foods Plc and Flour Mills Nigeria Plc.

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...that the people may know



Bassirou Faye sworn in as Senegal's youngest president

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Kaduna, Benin, Kano DisCos' revenue jumps amid poor power supply in 2023

TELIAT SULE

The 11 electricity distribution companies in Nigeria generated N1.065 trillion as revenue in 2023, a significant improvement over the N828.09 billion realised in the previous year. However, the 28.7 per cent increase in annual revenue came amid poor electricity generation during the same period.

This is so because while all the DisCos made more revenue in 2023, the same could not be said of electricity supplied in the same year. According to the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), all the DisCos distributed 23,925.51 GWh in 2023, up from 21,817 GWh in 2022.

The overall power supplied last year showed there was an improvement. However, a company-by-company analysis revealed that the increase in power supply came from some, and not all the DisCos.

Specifically, four electricity distribution companies supplied less electricity in 2023 even as they made more revenue, justifying the move by some state governments to take over some of these DisCos in order to

improve electricity supply to households and businesses.

Kaduna DisCo supplied 1,099.95 GWh in 2023, down from 1,415 GWh in the previous year. This amounted to a decline of 28.6 per cent in power supply.

Power supply declined by 2.5 per cent in areas covered by the Benin DisCo. It also declined by 1.4 per cent in areas under Kano DisCo, while it marginally fell by 0.3 per cent in areas under Enugu DisCo.

In terms of revenue performance of each distribution com-

pany, Ikeja DisCo maintained its unrivalled position by generating N218.61 billion. Its 2023 revenue recorded an increase of 31.7 per cent over the previous year's N165.98 billion.

Eko DisCo generated N177.59 billion in 2023, amounting to 42.3 per cent increase over N124.79 billion in 2022. Abuja DisCo generated N167.38 billion in 2023 as against N125.67 billion in the previous year, representing an increase of 33.9 per cent. Ibadan DisCo made N111.29 billion in

2023 as against N95.67 billion in 2022.

The top four DisCos in terms of revenue generation collectively made N674.89 billion, representing 63.3 per cent of the total revenue made by the DisCos.

Benin DisCo realised N84.62 billion as against N68.27 billion in the previous year; Enugu DisCo, N82.46 billion compared to N70.74 billion; Port Harcourt DisCo, N74.66 billion compared to N56.96 billion, while Kano DisCo made N55.24 billion

compared to N47.86 billion in 2022.

Further, Jos DisCo generated N38.97 billion in 2023 as against N30.17 billion in 2022; Kaduna DisCo generated N32.35 billion in 2023 as against N28.28 billion, while Yola DisCo N22.31 billion in 2023 in contrast to N13.67 billion in 2022.

The NBS further stated that the total number of electricity customers in the country as of December 2023 stood at 10.15 million, out of which those billed by estimation billing sys-

tem were 5.74 million, and those served by meters were 4.77 million households and businesses.

It would be recalled that recently, the state governments under the coverage of Benin Electricity Distribution Company have made moves to take over the company in order to reposition it for better service delivery as, according to them, it is only by repositioning the firm that it can key into the developmental strides taking place in the states which are Edo, Ekiti, Delta and Ondo.



SENEGALESE PRESIDENT'S INAUGURATION:

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (left) and newly sworn-in President of Senegal, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, after the latter's inauguration in Diamniadio, Senegal, yesterday.

JAMB uncovers 1,665 fake A'Level results

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NEWS

Bassirou Faye sworn in as Senegal's youngest president

BLESSING IMAGBENIKARO

In a historic moment for Senegal, 44-year-old Bassirou Diomaye Faye was on Tuesday, April 2, 2024, sworn in as the country's fifth and youngest president since independence.

At 44, Faye, whose victory can be described as a journey from prison to palace, is also Africa's youngest president.

Faye, a left-wing pan-Africanist, took the oath of office in Diamniadio, near Dakar, a ceremony which was graced by

prominent African leaders including Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Raised in Ndiaganiao, Senegal, Faye, whose political journey can be described as one that was marked by adversity, was only released 10 days before the presidential ballot under an amnesty announced by outgoing President Macky Sall. He reportedly launched his campaign while still detained, and won the ballot despite never having held elected office before.

In his inauguration speech,

Faye pledged to uphold the constitution, defend national independence, and pursue African unity. He emphasized priorities of national reconciliation, addressing the cost-of-living crisis, and combating corruption, working alongside his mentor Ousmane Sonko.

The newly elected president also outlined his vision for Senegal, aiming to regain control over key sectors such as oil, gas, and fishing, while advocating for agricultural investment to achieve food self-sufficiency.

Despite his populist stance, Faye has reassured investors of Senegal's commitment to productive cooperation.

The president's democratic victory has garnered widespread praise, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressing a keen interest in deepening the partnership between the United States and Senegal. As Senegal's fifth president since independence, Faye's presidency has inspired hope for a new era of reform and progress in the West African nation.



COURTESY VISIT:

Director General/CEO, Delta State Contributory Health Commission, Dr. Isaac Akpoveta (4th right), and some publishers of community newspapers in the state, during a courtesy visit to the DG in his office in Asaba.

JAMB uncovers 1,665 fake A'Level results

AGENCY REPORT

The Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has uncovered at least 1,665 fake A'level results during the Direct Entry registration process.

The board's weekly bulletin made available to newsmen in Abuja on Tuesday, said the Registrar, Prof. Is-haq Oloyede gave the figures when he received officials of the National Association of Nigeria Colleges of Education Students, in his office.

He explained that the A'level results verification was occasioned by the endemic corruption associated with the system and the need to restore the integrity of the admission process.

According to him, out of the fake results, 397 were from Colleges of Education, 453 university diplomas and the rest for other A'level certificates.

Oloyede said the institutions must take measures to safeguard the integrity of their certificates, adding that JAMB would continue to scrutinise the certificates through measures that would stand the test of time.

The registrar recalled that in the past, when a candidate applied for Direct Entry, the Board would simply ask awarding institutions to do the necessary screening and due diligence.

He however said that JAMB was dumbfounded by the startling revelations from Bayero University, Kano, where out of

the 148 Direct Entry applications to the institution, only six of the certificates forwarded for processing were genuine.

The registrar added that it was the discovery of this monumental fraud that prompted the meeting of critical stakeholders, who met to chart ways of combating the menace.

Part of the measures suggested, he said, was the constitution of an A'level result verification task force, as well as the creation of a common platform for the verification of A'level results and certificates.

He said the platform was reliable and user-friendly as it only took five minutes to verify any certificate.

Oloyede also disclosed that the board had adopted a "No verification, No admission" policy.

The registrar said 15 institutions had not sufficiently complied with the verification requests from the board, adding that more than 20 unverified candidates were affected.

He said that the board would have to pre-verify candidates applying with the certificates of the 15 institutions before they could complete their DE registration process.

According to him, in the ongoing DE registration, candidates could go ahead and register while the school verifies them at the backend.

He, however, declared that the 15 institutions, which were yet to fully comply, would have to pre-verify holders of their certificates before they complete the registration process.

Uromi monarch lauds Obaseki for massive infrastructure works

EUBALDUS ENAHORO

The Ojuromi of Uromi kingdom, HRH Anslem Oda-loigie Edenojie 11 JP, has commended Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki for the grading of roads in the area, including the Chief Tony Anenih, Central Hospital and Ahojie's roads.

Speaking during the 50th Annual Convention of the Uromi Community Association of Nigeria at Uromi, the traditional ruler also commended the governor for the assurances that portable water will soon flow in Uromi.

"Recently one of my chiefs briefed me of the water project the Edo State Government with other collaborating agencies are handling in Uromi. The visit of the governor to Uromi and the assurance that portable water will soon flow in our homes is commendable. The National Association is hereby directed to follow up the actualisation of the project.

"I want to thank the executive governor for the massive grading carried out in the stadium. It is my passionate appeal that the stadium be provided with perimeter fence and other infra-

structures that will make it functional for our able youths.

"Also, heartwarming, are the Chief Tony Anenih Road and the Central road/Ahojie road which the governor graded and stone pitched. It will be appreciated if the road is provided with side drains and asphalted," the traditional ruler added.

While appealing to the people to play politics without bitterness, the Ujorumi of Uromi noted that, "luckily, we have two of the leading contestants from Edo land. My advice to all of us is that we should play politics

without bitterness.

"We are brothers and sisters and therefore we should campaign with maturity, based on issues that affect the people of Edo State. I pray that God Almighty will hear our prayers to have an Edo governor in this election.

"I want to enjoin you all that took part in the elections that have come and gone to allow peace and love reign after the elections. You are all brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of Uromi. If you did not win today, tomorrow you may be lucky," he added.

Fubara says pushing to make Rivers medical tourism hub

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM, PORT HARCOURT

Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has vowed to make the state the first choice medical tourism destination in Nigeria, and indeed, Africa.

Governor Fubara explained that to achieve this, his administration was seriously paying greater attention to improving healthcare infrastructure and services available to the people, particularly at the primary level to bridge observed gaps between the primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services in the state.

Governor Fubara emphasised that the ongoing reconstruction, rehabilitation and upgrade of all primary healthcare facilities across the state, with a view to integrating them with existing secondary and tertiary institutions, was intended to deliver immediate but quality healthcare services to the majority of the people.

The governor made this known while speaking to newsmen in Government House, Port Harcourt on the modest achievements of his administration in the health sector since assumption of office.

He stated that besides the construction, renovation and upgrade of primary healthcare centres across the state, the capacity of the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH) has been improved with the training of personnel, and establishment of critical units, equipped with modern equipment to deliver sterling expertise services to patients.

Governor Fubara said: "We are proud of our modest achievements in the health sector, particularly in the construction of primary healthcare centres.

"We are also supporting the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital to perform optimally. Do not also forget the contributory healthcare insurance law that we have started implementing.

"I assure you that we will complete all the ongoing healthcare infrastructure projects that we have around the state."

Governor Fubara also identified some challenges that have frustrated smooth delivery of healthcare services in the state, and promised to tackle them.

"With all these on ground, it is evident that the primary challenges in our healthcare systems are more with inadequate man-

power, corruption, indiscipline and ineffective management.

"We will deal with all identified challenges and ensure that the healthcare system functions optimally to deliver affordable and efficient services to all citizens of the state," he said.

Also speaking, the Rivers State Commissioner for Health, Dr Adaeze Ore, said that under the leadership of Governor Fubara, the state has experienced formidable strides in building a rigorous and robust primary healthcare system.

Dr. Ore noted that the current emphasis was on renovating and upgrading already existing primary healthcare facilities in order to enhance their functionality so that Rivers people can have access to affordable and accessible primary healthcare services in the state.

She added: "Another update to note is His Excellency's approval of the implementation of the Rivers State Contributory Health Protection Programme which is the state's health insurance scheme.

"His Excellency has approved the implementation, making Rivers State the latest state to come on board on the implementation of health insurance schemes across the country.

"The law was passed in 2021 but unfortunately, we did not have the implementation of this state's health insurance scheme. But His Excellency has graciously approved and with the announcement of the appointment of an Acting Executive Secretary in the person of Dr Vetty Agala, the team has hit the ground running and the office is in place.

"The Federal Government has been notified. The National Health Insurance Authority and the Office of the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare have all been notified so that all the processes needed for the enrolment of citizens and residents of Rivers State in the health insurance scheme, especially our vulnerable populations, can immediately commence."

Dr Ore further highlighted the importance of the ongoing employment of various categories of health workers in the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital and the Rivers State Hospitals Management Board as approved by the governor.

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The featured companies are those that have invested in the Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPP) and other off-takers in the agribusiness sector. Manufacturing companies such as Don Mac Limited put up a strong following with the volume of investment. This is just as cement manufacturing is captured with Okpella Cement Limited, operated by the Dangote Group.

Ikpomwosa Nosakhare a lecturer and policy analyst at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), said the development bodes well for the local economy, as it is evidence of the state's dramatic shift from a civil service state to an industrial haven.

"The state has taken a turn for the better as the rise of manufacturing, food processing and agribusiness concerns means increased productivity and more jobs for the locals. It also means that the graduates from the universities in the state are more likely to find jobs locally. The labour requirements are quite specific so we expect that a lot of effort would go into supporting the higher institutions in the state," Nosakhare said.

He added that though a form of investment incentive, the pioneer status policy is engineered to lead to growth and expansion in the local economy in the long run because the companies would boost local capacity and ultimately contribute to economic returns.